

THE GROUP

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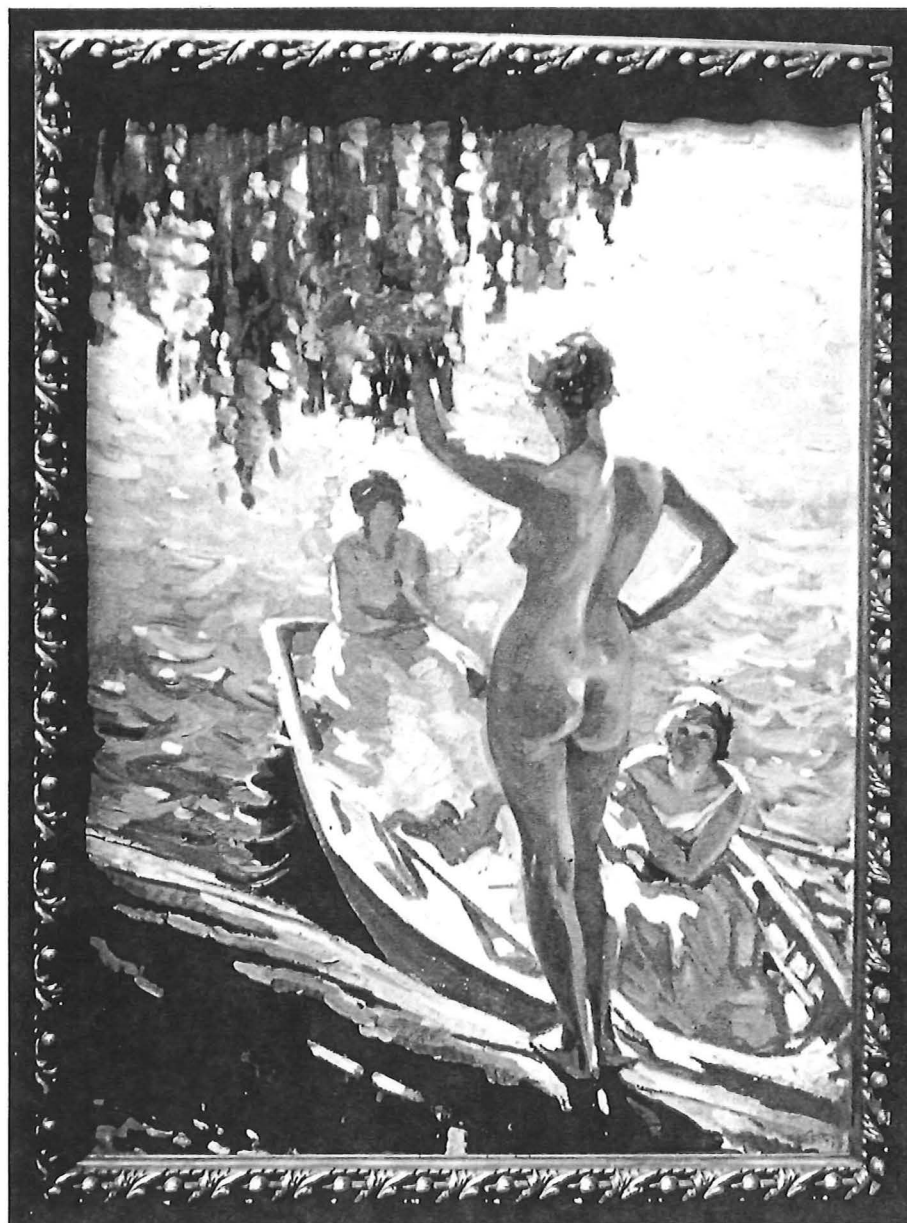


Plate 1: Evelyn Page, *December Morn*, c.1929
Oil on canvas, 78.3 x 59.5 cms
(Robert McDougall Art Gallery)

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ABSTRACT

The Group was a loose association of artists, who exhibited together on an annual basis in Christchurch, from 1927 until 1977, when it disbanded. It was founded by artists who wished to retain control over the work they exhibited. The members selected their own exhibits and displayed them as they saw fit. The format of the shows, once established, remained relatively unchanged, even though the membership varied from year to year.

An historical overview of its fifty years of existence illustrates that as alternative opportunities for artists to exhibit increased, the Group's usefulness declined.

In its first twenty years the Group was critically well received. The critics were enthusiastic about the new format, and the vitality and variety of works exhibited. The format of the shows, and the general individualism fostered, encouraged experimentation.

The critics also responded to developments in landscape painting, now described as regionalism. The Group became a focus for this activity.

Seen in a wider context, the Group was one of a number of attempts made by more progressive artists to combat the conservatism of art institutions, and as such was successful because of its lack of organisational structure.

The purpose of this study has been to provide a comprehensive picture of the unique character and contribution of this independent group to new developments in New Zealand art.

INTRODUCTION

In this survey of the Christchurch Group I have concentrated mainly on the first twenty years of its existence, which is the period when I believe the Group was both more relevant and vital. It was a time when opportunities for exhibiting were extremely limited, and the Group shows represented an alternative to the staid Society of Arts annual exhibitions. The sheer logistics of trying to imagine the appearance of each of the shows held over the whole fifty year period, in which over three hundred artists, craftsmen and architects participated was also a contributing factor in my decision to limit my study to the shows and exhibitors before the Group's 1947 Retrospective exhibition.

I have however, provided an index of all the exhibitors which also indicates in which shows they participated. This will facilitate its use in conjunction with the bibliography of material relating to the shows.

Where possible illustrations are provided of works mentioned in the text. These illustrations also provide a graphic demonstration of the stylistic variety which was one of the main characteristics of the Group's shows.

I would like to acknowledge the help I received in my research from the Canterbury University Library, Canterbury Public Library, Robert McDougall Art Gallery and the Canterbury Society of Arts; the Hocken Library and Dunedin Public Art Gallery; the National Art Gallery and Alexander Turnbull Library; Fletcher Challenge (Auckland), Auckland City Art Gallery and Elam School of Fine Arts Library; Thanks are also

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CHAPTER 1

AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE GROUP 1927-1977

*The Group wasn't made by a revolution,
but it did become revolutionary; and
died as respectability forced the
doors.*

Colin McCahon¹

The beginnings of 'The Group' can be traced back to 1927, when seven ex-students of the Canterbury College School of Art hired a studio together for the purpose of drawing and painting from life. At the end of that year they held a small exhibition of their work.²

The studio was given up the following year, but they decided to continue with the exhibitions which were held thereafter in the Canterbury Society of Arts gallery. The format of The Group's annual exhibitions was quickly established, and remained relatively unchanged up until their final show in 1977.

Recollections of the early days in the hired studio are scant and hazy.³ The Group's "1947 Retrospective Exhibition Catalogue" names six of the seven foundation members as being: Evelyn Polson (Page), Viola MacMillan Brown, Margaret Anderson, Ngaio Marsh, Edith Wall and

¹ "The Group 1927-77", Survey No 16, Christchurch City Council, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, November 1977, p.14.

² "The 1945 Group, Christchurch", Arts in New Zealand, Vol XVII No 6 (January/February 1946), pp 22-23.

³ For example, Margaret Frankel (née Anderson), a foundation member, in a letter to Leo Bensemann (30 April 1977), "I wish that I could be of more help to you but I find that I have no recollection of those early group days."

W.H. Montgomery. The seventh member was most likely to have been W.S. Baverstock. Although examples of his work were shown in the 'Retrospective', no mention of early connections was made. However, H.S. Baverstock, in his book dedicated to William Baverstock, wrote, "My brother (*W.S. Baverstock*) was a foundation member and acted as treasurer."⁴ He then goes on to describe their studio as,

... a large, well-lighted room in which the "Press" and "Evening News" was printed in their former premises in Cashel Street prior to 1908.⁵

The studio occupied the whole of the top floor of the building.

This, however, was not the first studio these artists had occupied. Several of them had rented a much smaller studio prior to finding the one in Cashel Street. Evelyn Page recalls, in a conversation with Priscilla Pitts,

We had - (*sic*) Ngaio Marsh was another of my contemporaries at Art School and she and Rhona (Haszard), Edith Wall and Margaret Anderson, my good friend, and I, we rented a small room in Hereford Street for a studio - it was a tiny room⁶

⁴ H.S. Baverstock, In Memory of William Baverstock, OBE, FRSA, p 47. There is a problem with this account. The author is inconsistent with his dates, stating that his brother was a member in 1927 (page 38) and later saying he was a member from 1928 to 1936.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Transcript of a taped conversation between Evelyn Page and Priscilla Pitts, May 1982, Wellington. Note, according to Gordon Brown, Adaption and Nationalism, Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, Wellington, 1975, footnote 147, p 24, Rhona Haszard left for Europe in 1926.

Ngaio Marsh, in her autobiography, mentions such a studio, which she shared with fellow students. It was, she says,

A small, scantily furnished room at the top of an office block near the school ... in it we had meals between classes, worked at anatomy, perspective and composition, talked and talked, and sometimes sat to each other as models for the head. ⁷

Evelyn Page credits Edith Wall with the discovery of the vacated office space in Cashel Street. Other artists joined them when they shifted to the new premises. One such, discussed by Evelyn Page, was W.H. Montgomery. He was both a Member of Parliament and an artist. He had been on several trips to Tahiti, and had seen works by Gauguin. Page made the comment that,

... we invited quite a number of people to it (*the studio*) and we used to - we made it a policy to invite only the newest, the most modern of our contemporaries.... ⁸

The artists would congregate in the studio, for discussions, and occasionally to work from the model. At the end of 1927 the artists decided to hold an exhibition of their work in the studio. It was from this modest beginning that 'The Group's' annual exhibitions evolved.

In September 1929, The Group, as they became known, ⁹

⁷ Ngaio Marsh, Black Beech and Honey Dew: An Autobiography, London 1966, p 127.

⁸ Priscilla Pitts/Evelyn Page conversation.

⁹ They were thus titled in their 1929 catalogue. Indications are that they were called The Group in 1928, from the article by William Moore, "New Zealand Art and Australian Art: A Comparison of Method", Art in New Zealand, Vol.1, No 3 (March 1929) p 152.

mounted an exhibition. It was held in the Durham Street Art Gallery of the Canterbury Society of Arts. According to the catalogue and newspaper notices, nine artists contributed works, which included mainly paintings but also caricatures, engravings and wash drawings. The exhibitors were Misses Ceridwen Thornton, Evelyn Polson, Margaret Anderson, Cora Wilding, Edith Collier, Stephanie Buckhurst-Vincent, Viola MacMillan Brown and Messrs W.H. Montgomery and W.S. Baverstock.¹⁰ That seven of the nine exhibitors were women did not go unnoticed by the critic for the Christchurch Times. Professor James Shelley commented on the fact in his review and added,

There was a time when critics could write - as I think George Moore did - that women were incapable from their very nature, of creative work in the arts; such a dictum would be a dangerous one to make in these days with an artist like Laura Knight dominating the walls of the Royal Academy at Home, and with our own 1929 Group demanding our attention here. ¹¹

Women artists continued to be well represented in Group exhibitions after 1929, but never again in such a large majority.

Virtually all the members of the 1929 Group were also 'working members' of the Canterbury Society of Arts.¹²

¹⁰ "Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by the 1929 Group" (10 Sept, 1929) catalogue. Ref: Appendix re newspaper items. Note: Ngaio Marsh had left for England by 1929.

¹¹ Professor James Shelley, "The 1929 Group: Exhibition of Paintings", Christchurch Times, September 10, 1929, p 14.

¹² The exceptions being Viola MacMillan Brown and Edith Collier, who nevertheless had both exhibited with the C.S.A.

Thus The Group did not set itself up in opposition to the Art Societies. As Ngaio Marsh said,

At no time, during my association with The Group, was there a deliberate attitude towards the Arts of Christchurch. There were no politics. We were not a bunch of rebels, or angries, we were a group of friends.¹³

This statement reinforces W.S. Baverstock's account of The Group in the September 1929 issue of Art in New Zealand. Asked to explain The Group, Baverstock said,

We are a group flying no standard; we have no plank or platform, nor do we make one of having none; we are representative of no school ...¹⁴

To better appreciate why they chose to exhibit together it is useful to consider the situation facing the younger painters with regard to exhibiting in Christchurch. The Canterbury Society of Arts was the major institutional exhibiting venue at this time.

During the 1920s the Canterbury Society of Arts had prospered, with an increase in membership, and record sales.¹⁵ By 1930, the Society had four hundred and forty-five working members.¹⁶ This meant that the works of an individual in the annual exhibition would necessarily be limited, and displayed at the discretion of the hanging committee.

¹³ Olivia Spencer Bower, citing Ngaio Marsh, Survey No 16, p 8.

¹⁴ "The 1929 Group" - W.S. Baverstock, Art in New Zealand, Vol II, No 5 (September 1929), p 63.

¹⁵ Canterbury Society of Arts 1880-1980, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, 1980, p 15.

¹⁶ "Canterbury Paintings 1860-1940", Survey (August 1972), Christchurch City Council, Robert McDougall Art Gallery. No pagination.

Baverstock described the annual exhibitions of the Art Society as "bazaar-like and bewildering" because of their size and arrangement. He saw the advantage in the much smaller Group's exhibition as being that,

.. the works of the individual, not drastically limited in number; could be seen and better appreciated.¹⁷

It is true that the Society had made some changes over the decade of the twenties, such as the introduction of a fuller programme which included exhibitions of sketches, photography, and arts and crafts; as well as one-man-shows.¹⁸ But it did not escape the inherent characteristics of a large institution. As Baverstock said,

One can, of course, be loyal to a big society, but one cannot really know it, one cannot always comprehend the rulings of its collective mind ... and it retains the coldness of an institution.¹⁹

Furthermore, despite the Society having made various changes in policy, it remained essentially conservative. Roland Hipkins' assessment of art societies no doubt expressed the attitude of some of the younger artists when he wrote,

Art societies do not create - they receive and they reject. They save the people from viewing what is artistically ungrammatical according to known laws and standards approved by the majority of those who form selection committees, and they reject what is difficult to judge by such

¹⁷ "The 1929 Group", Art in New Zealand, Vol II, No 5 (September 1929) p 63.

¹⁸ "Canterbury Society of Arts 1880-1980", p 15.

¹⁹ "The 1929 Group", p 63.

standards. They take a middle course, for when you have a public the fare must accord with the susceptibilities of those who give their support.²⁰

The Group, as an independent exhibiting body, offered an alternative. It provided the younger painters with an extra opportunity for their works to be shown, free from the decisions of a selection committee. Each Group member was free to select his or her own works for display. In addition the works of an artist were hung together in a group, rather than scattered throughout as they were in the Society's annual exhibitions.

The cost of hiring the gallery, and promoting the exhibition could be shared by the members, without reducing the impact of each artist's exhibits. John Coley, in an article on The Group, suggested that the spacious galleries of the Society were also a contributing factor in their banding together to exhibit, since the

smaller North Gallery alone could accommodate all the work that the average artist could produce in five years.²¹

The one-man-show did remain a relatively uncommon form of exhibition throughout the 1920s, 30s and 40s. The only other venue, apart from the Society's Durham Street Gallery, appears to have been at Fishers & Son, a firm primarily dealing in picture framing and artists' supplies.

The 1929 Group, then, was one possible solution to the desire of artists to retain control over the way their

²⁰ Roland Hipkins, "N.Z. Academy of Fine Arts Annual Exhibition", Art in New Zealand, Vol VI, No 2 (December 1933) p 68.

²¹ John Coley, "An Invitation to be Hung Here is an Honour", Christchurch Star, September 15, 1973, p 7.

works were to be shown. That it was a satisfactory solution to both the artists concerned and the public can be gauged by the fact that the format of The Group shows remained essentially unchanged for the next fifty years.

The next Group show was held in 1931. The inclusion of works by new members Francis Shurrock, R.N. Field, James Cook and his friend d'Auvergne Boxall, strengthened The Group. The range of media shown expanded to include examples of pencil drawings, lithography and sculpture in stone and terracotta.

The work of R.N. Field in particular was responsible for establishing The Group's reputation for showing experimental work.²² Dr G.M.L. Lester in his opening speech at the 1931 show, was reported as saying:

The work in the exhibition is representative of a definite attitude toward art - of revolt and experiment ... The question then arises, 'What do they revolt against?' From their work it appears that it is against the whole body of conventions which have filled the Academy in England for seventy years with so much mediocre work; which have brought before the Hanging Committee of the Society of Arts the problem of deciding whether to accept pretty woolly sentimental stuff or to turn it down and incur unpopularity.²³

It would be incorrect to assume that Dr Lester's remarks were applicable to the works of all the exhibitors. Not all the artists represented in this, or subsequent exhibitions, produced works which were "provocative" or

²² ref. Chapter 3.

²³ "Painting and Sculpture. Work of the 1931 Group. Exhibition at Art Gallery", Christchurch Press, September 10, 1931, p 13.

expressive of "modern attitudes".²⁴ The works of James Cook, with his meticulous drawings, and W.S. Baverstock's caricatures, for example, were equally at home on the walls of the Society's annual exhibitions.

Nevertheless, The Group exhibitions did come to provide an outlet for more progressive artists to exhibit works in various media.

To one viewer at least, the 1931 exhibition came as a breath of fresh air. M.T. Woollaston, who was a student at Canterbury College School of Art at the time, was so impressed with the work of R.N. Field, in particular, that he decided to enrol for tuition at the Dunedin School of Art. He wrote, "the example of the Group show had taught me that there was such a thing as independence in painting ..."²⁵ Of the works he saw, "Here was wild excitement after what, it now became plain, had been my long drought of earnest mediocrity."²⁶

New contributors to the 1932 Group included Rita Angus,²⁷ her husband Alfred Cook, J.A. Johnstone and Madeline Vyner. Christopher Perkins exhibited four oils and several drawings by invitation.

One review stated:

²⁴ Ibid. This will be discussed more fully in a later chapter.

²⁵ M.T. Woollaston, The Far-Away Hills: A Meditation on New Zealand Landscape, Auckland Gallery Associates, 1962, p 35.

²⁶ Ibid., p 31. In this book, and Sage Tea, An Autobiography, Auckland 1980, pp 221-222, Woollaston actually discusses aspects of both the 1931 and 1932 exhibitions. He talks about Field's *Christ at the Well* and *River and Sea* exhibited in 1931; R.N. Field's *Miss Kelsey* and Christopher Perkins from the 1932 exhibition.

²⁷ In the catalogue under her married name, Rita Cook.

Their exhibition ... is the successor to similar exhibitions held in 1927, 1929, and in 1931, and, as in them, the work shown provides a foil for the conventionally painted landscapes and portraits that abound in the annual exhibitions of the more staid Society of Arts.²⁸

The Group's growing reputation for showing the unconventional was confirmed, especially by the presence of Perkins, who was described as being "never other than vigorous and provocative in whatever medium he adopts."²⁹

4 The first non-figurative works were shown in this exhibition, by Madeline Vyner. They were described as "decorative mental abstraction",³⁰ and were inspired by her profession as a dance instructor and choreographer. These paintings were an attempt to put onto canvas the rhythms of dance. Whilst the results could only be described as "decorative", the works no doubt mystified the critics and public alike, and confirmed in their minds that The Group shows were a place to see experimental works. It is possible that these works, albeit naive, were amongst the earliest abstract works to be exhibited in New Zealand.

The character of the Group shows fully developed when the practice of having guest exhibitors became a feature, the custom from 1932. The guest exhibitor would be asked to contribute work, usually after being nominated

²⁸ "Exhibition of Paintings 'The 1932 Group' Modern Spirit Shown", Christchurch Press, September 6, 1932, p 11.

²⁹ "1932 Group Exhibition", Art in New Zealand, Vol V, No 18 (December 1932) p. 97.

³⁰ 'Chiaroscuro', "Exhibition of 1932 Group. Much Experimental Work in Paintings and Sketches"; Christchurch Sun, September 7, 1932, p 7. An illustration, *Dance*, was reproduced in the Christchurch Sun, September 6, 1932, p 9.

by a member of The Group, and the local members had been consulted and agreed. Often the guest exhibitors would be asked to become members after exhibiting with The Group on two or three occasions.

In 1933, members of The Group, with a number of other artists, became involved in another organisation - the New Zealand Society of Artists. This society was formed for much the same reasons as The Group, but was more outspoken about its objectives. However, in its attempts to combat what were perceived as being the deficiencies of existing art institutions, the society came to resemble them. It is worth examining this organisation in some detail, because in its operations it illustrates some of the problems facing artists before the use of dealer galleries became a normal practice.

NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF ARTISTS

The New Zealand Society of Artists* was formed in July 1933. In Christchurch, W. Basil Honour was the main instigator behind the formation of the Society. When Honour placed the proposal to form the Society before the members of the "1933 Group", they decided to adopt it unanimously.³¹ The Group formed the core of the new society.

Basil Honour's conception of the Society was inspired by the example of the Group's exhibitions, and he hoped to

* referred to hereafter as NZSoA.

³¹ "New Society of Artists Formation in Christchurch. Aims of Organisation Announced", Christchurch Press, July 10, 1933, p. 8.

follow the format of their exhibitions. However, the Society differed from the Group in a number of ways.

The most obvious difference lay in the structured nature of the Society. The Group functioned with the minimum of organisation and contact between members, its chief activity being the mounting of exhibitions. The Society, on the other hand, was run by a committee and had a written Constitution.³² The Society encouraged subscribing members, but the control of the Society was to remain in the hands of the artist members. At least eight out of the twelve elected onto the management committee had to be artists. Professor James Shelley was elected as President. Vice-Presidents for 1933 included Dr James Hight, W.S. Newburgh, Cedric Savage and F.A. Shurrock. The committee was made up of the Group members, Evelyn Polson, Viola MacMillan Brown, Margaret Anderson, W.S. Baverstock, Alfred Cook and J.A. Johnstone. W. Basil Honour's role was that of Honorary Secretary and Treasurer.³³

Candidates for artist membership were to be restricted to those "who were 'still-alive'".³⁴ A three-fourths majority was needed for a candidate to enter as an artist member, since candidates:

have to satisfy the Society that their intentions are consistent with its ideal of encouraging

³² New Zealand Society of Artists (Inc.). Rules and Constitution. Wellington, Harry Tombs, July 1933.

³³ "Society of Artists opens its Clubrooms. Mr Shurrock's Lecture". (Christchurch) Sun, October 19, 1933.

³⁴ Ibid.

original art, otherwise they cannot hope to succeed. Something of a duty, therefore, as well as an honour, attaches to those who belong to the new society.³⁵

The main object of the Society, as stated in the Constitution and catalogues was:

To encourage a definite development in artistic achievements among New Zealand artists, to interest the public in the living movements in art and to foster the understanding and appreciation of original work; to encourage and assist students in the same direction.³⁶

The artists in the NZSoA believed that the art societies were not fulfilling this role. Basil Honour, in describing the conditions which prompted the formation of the NZSoA came out quite strongly in his condemnation of the existing art institutions. Baverstock, by comparison, when acting as the spokesman for The Group in 1929, was never as explicit in his criticism of the art societies; although criticism was implied in the form of their exhibitions. Honour stated:

Obviously those responsible (*the founding members of the NZSoA*) are dissatisfied with existing institutions which, lacking enterprise, vision and directional force, have become more or less moribund.³⁷

Honour enumerated reasons for the deficiencies of the art societies and art schools. These included letting 'lay-men' be in executive positions in art societies, and thereby having the situation arise where the "artistically

³⁵ W. Basil Honour, "New Zealand Society of Artists", Art in New Zealand, Vol VI, No 1 (September 1933), p 27.

³⁶ Ibid, p 25; also "New Zealand Society of Artists. First General Exhibition, 1933" (Catalogue) p 23.

³⁷ "New Zealand Society of Artists", Art in New Zealand, p 24.

inexpert" were in a position to judge art and artists; unbusinesslike management of art societies to the detriment of the artists; and galleries stocked with second-rate and non-educative works. He claimed that all these factors had contributed to a state of stagnation in artistic production and appreciation. Art society annual exhibitions, said Honour, featured only "endless repetitions of ideas, techniques, motifs and effects"; while art schools were concerned only with teaching "mechanical vision and naturalistic representation". Neither institution encouraged appreciation or understanding of modern movements of art, let alone the production of works which indicated any independence of outlook.³⁸

The NZSoA's main response was to create an organisation where the management would remain in the hands of artist members. To avoid stagnation, the Society drafted rules to ensure that some new officers would be elected each year.³⁹

It was hoped that, as the NZSoA grew, more of its aims could be fulfilled, which in turn would provide the the directional force lacking in existing societies.

The Society made a promising start. Within three months of its formation, it had opened clubrooms and a studio at 115 Gloucester Street, Christchurch. At the opening, F.A. Shurrock gave an illustrated lecture. The Society proposed a series of such lectures, to be held

³⁸ Ibid, pp 24-25.

³⁹ Each year, one-third artist members were to retire from the committee, in rotation and alphabetical order. They could re-submit themselves for re-election. Ibid, p 27.

once a month. The Society wished to develop "a bond between people interested in art and people expressing it and so to stimulate both."⁴⁰ The lectures were one activity designed to introduce the public to artists, and ideas about art. As a further encouragement to the lay subscriber, the offer of gifts of original etchings was made. Members in 1933 received an etching by Alfred Cook, titled *Castle Hill*.⁴¹ The clubroom facilities were to be extended to include a library, which would deal primarily with material relating to modern movements in art.

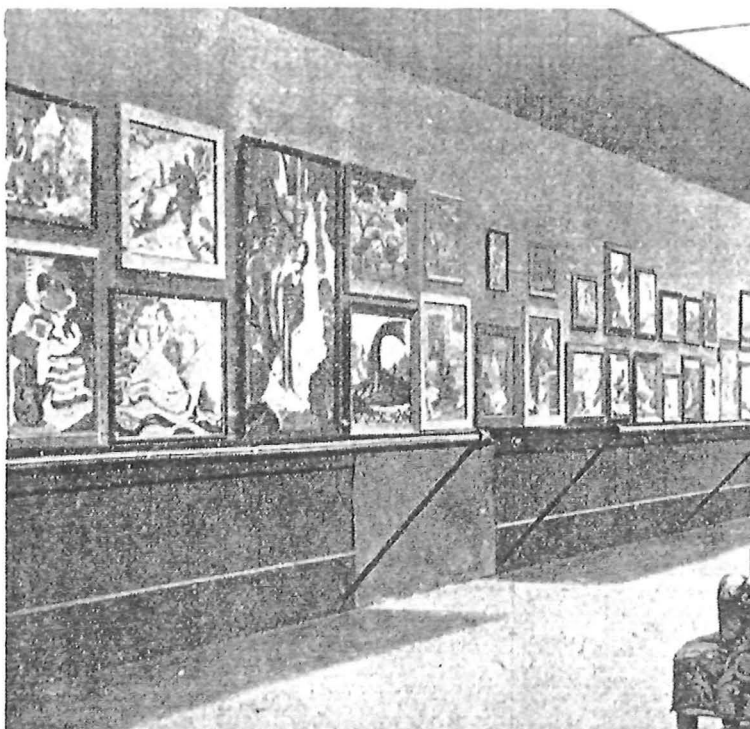
The Society held its first general exhibition in late October 1933. The work of thirty-eight artists was shown. Exhibitors included most of the 1932 Group members (plus past and future members),⁴² and various other artists from all over New Zealand. Following the pattern of Group exhibitions, the artist was free to select his or her own work, and each artist's work was hung in a separate panel. The Society also arranged for the pictures to be displayed against a neutral background. The foreword of the catalogue explained:

The choice of the background is such as to approximate more to the average wall of the

⁴⁰ "Society of Artists Opens its Clubrooms",

⁴¹ "New Zealand Society of Artists. First General Exhibition 1933", Catalogue No 9, p 5.

⁴² R.N. Field was overseas, d'Auvergne Boxall had left New Zealand, Montgomery didn't show. Past and future members included: Chrystabel Aitken, Olivia Spencer Bower, E. Rosa Sawtell, Ngaio Marsh, Rata Lovell-Smith, Ceridwen Thornton, Louise Henderson, W.J. Reed, Cora Wilding and Stephanie Vincent.



2. View of the 1934 New Zealand Society of Artists Annual Exhibition: Durham Street Art Gallery, Christchurch.



3. View of a wall of a Canterbury Society of Arts Annual Exhibition: Section of west wall, Durham Street Art Gallery, 1926.

home, and incidentally is of great advantage to each work displayed.⁴³

Twenty-two works were sold during the course of the exhibition, and further works donated by artist members were sold at an auction held on the final day of the exhibition.⁴⁴ The purpose of the auction was to raise money for the library, to create a fund to assist artists in need, and a scholarship for overseas study for promising students.

The success of the Society's first year of activities encouraged a growth in membership, including the foundation of branches in other centres. The second exhibition of the Society was held in both Dunedin and Christchurch. Fifty-seven artists exhibited in the Christchurch exhibition. A total of three hundred and forty-six works were listed in the catalogue.⁴⁵ More works were shown than
2 in the 1934 annual exhibition of the Canterbury Society of
3 Arts.

The increase in membership had its problems though, as Frederick Page noted in his review of the exhibition.

⁴³ Ibid, and "Society of Artists. First Exhibition", Christchurch Times, October 26, 1933, p 3. Note: The Canterbury Society of Arts tried a neutral covering of burlap for the first time in 1936, Art in New Zealand, Vol VIII, No 4: (June 1936), p 240

⁴⁴ "Art Exhibition Closes. Society of Artists. Many Works Sold", Christchurch Press, November 6, 1933, p 10.

"New Zealand Society of Artists. Important Auction Sale of Pictures - Saturday 4 November. Catalogue of Auction." (University of Canterbury, Baverstock Coll)

⁴⁵ "New Zealand Society of Artists. Catalogue of Christchurch Exhibition (October 26 to November 8, 1934)". It can only be assumed that the exhibition was the same in each venue from Frederick Page's review - note 46.

He commented:

"The Society has not yet been able to exclude distressingly feeble and bad pictures, nor, alas, with its numbers going up, is it likely that it will ever be able to do so."⁴⁶

The question of membership entitlement was one of the reasons given for the artists who had originally been members of the Group resigning from the NZSoA in 1935.⁴⁷ Basil Honour listed two main causes for the split in the Society:

One was that certain members of the Old Group had wished to retain control of the Society. They wished to limit the membership, and they opposed the formation of branches in other centres ... Secondly .. one or two members had been trying to use the Society as a weapon against another society, or certain of its members.⁴⁷

The time spent by artists running the ever increasing society would have been at the expense of their personal work, and therefore also likely to have been a contributing factor in their decision to split from the Society.

The Group reverted to its small, relatively uncomplicated format and continued to survive, whilst the New Zealand Society of Artists had wound up its activities by early 1936.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Frederick Page, "N.Z. Society of Artists Exhibition", Art in New Zealand, Vol VII, No 2 (December 1934), p 80.

⁴⁷ "Split in the Ranks of N.Z. Society of Artists. Members Resign and Will Form Separate Body. Two Main Causes of Friction Alleged", Christchurch Sun, March 9, 1935, p 15, supported by a letter "To members of the N.Z. Society of Artists" (University of Canterbury, Baverstock Collection).

⁴⁸ "Art Notes - Christchurch", Art in New Zealand, Vol VIII, No 4 (June 1936) p 240.

THE 1930s AND 1940s

The Group held exhibitions in 1935, 1936 and 1938. There were no major departures from the established format of the exhibitions. Over the years a greater variety of exhibits were shown. Pottery was first exhibited in 1935 by R.N. Field, who had recently returned from Britain where he had made a study of the craft. It did not become a regular feature of the exhibitions until the 1950s. Typography from the Caxton Press, and architectural drawings by Paul Pascoe were shown in 1940.

New members joined, and others left.⁴⁹ The most controversial new member in the 1930s was M.T. Woollaston, who had first been a guest exhibitor in 1936. Olivia Spencer Bower and Rata Lovell-Smith joined in 1936 and Leo Bensemann in 1938. These artists were to have a long association with The Group.

Colin McCahon was the guest exhibitor in 1940. He recalls:

I became a member in 1940 and went up to Christchurch to see this first showing. I was bowled over by the spaciousness and some of the hanging of the exhibition - you could see the paintings.⁵⁰

Charles Grignon, the critic for the Christchurch Press, praised the 1940 Group, writing that their exhibition assumes a special importance now that the war makes the bringing of loan exhibitions from England impossible. As New Zealand must rely

⁴⁹ For example, Viola MacMillan Brown went overseas and married. Stephanie Vincent died in 1936.

⁵⁰ "The Group 1927-77", p 13.

on itself for artistic stimulation, the energy and versatility of this group of some of the younger Canterbury painters and their guest exhibitors from other parts of the South Island are particularly commendable.⁵¹

The number of visitors to the exhibition that year was such that the show was continued for an extra week.

The army requested the use of the Durham Street Art Gallery for the Medical Board in 1943, which meant the 1943, 1945 and 1946 Group Exhibitions were held in premises loaned by Ballantynes.

Despite the war, these were vital years for the Group exhibitors. It became apparent to the critics at this time, and was amply demonstrated in The Group shows, that there were artists such as Doris Lusk, Rita Angus, Rata Lovell-Smith, Evelyn Page, M.T. Woollaston and Colin McCahon, who were prepared to tackle the New Zealand landscape in a way which was no longer reminiscent of the 'Old World'. The strongest thread in New Zealand painting at this time was a regionalist one. The work of each of the aforementioned artists could, in the 1940s, virtually be identified with a particular place. This was the period when some of their styles really evolved and became readily identifiable.

In 1945, the intentions and organisation of The Group were restated by one of the members in Art in New Zealand.⁵² The article was written to encourage other small groups to

⁵¹ Charles Grignon, "The 1940 Group. Varied and Interesting Exhibition. Work of Younger Artists", Christchurch Press, September 28, 1940, p 14.

⁵² "The 1945 Group, Christchurch", The Arts in New Zealand, Vol XVII, No 6 (January/February 1946), pp 22-27.

develop along similar lines. That year, sixteen members of the Auckland-based Rutland Group exhibited with The Group.

1947 marked the twentieth anniversary of The Group and the occasion was celebrated with a Retrospective Exhibition. The exhibition included works by foundation members loaned especially for the show, as well as work by the current members. All but three of the thirty-five artists who had been members at one time or other were represented.⁵³

It was here that Colin McCahon showed his controversial 27 religious paintings based on the Crucifixion and Resurrection. These works caused consternation among critics and the public, not only because of McCahon's uncompromising treatment of the subjects, but also because of the inclusion of words on the canvases.⁵⁴

The next year The Group became involved in another controversy, the so-called '*Pleasure Garden* incident'. Six paintings by Frances Hodgkins, sent to New Zealand on approval through the British Council, were displayed at the 1948 Group Exhibition. The paintings were shown there because the Society of Arts apparently had no other opportunity to display them. The request that no reference to the paintings be made in newspaper notices resulted, for some reason, in

⁵³ "The Group Show Retrospective Exhibition", Christchurch Press, Nov. 4, 1947, p 2. Note, the notice in the Christchurch Star-Sun, Nov. 3, 1947, p 3, and the review in the N.Z. Listener, Nov. 21, 1947, say all but two. The three not represented were R.N. Field, Edith Collier and d'Auvergne Boxall.

⁵⁴ A.R.D. Fairburn wrote, "Is it possible that they have a meaning not to be picked up by the naked eye? ... I can only say that I suspect not. They might pass as graffiti on the walls of some celestial lavatory ... " "Art in Canterbury", Landfall, Vol 2, No 1 (March 1948), p 50.

no reviews at all of the Group Exhibition appearing in the dailies.⁵⁵

A debate developed over the question of whether or not the painting *The Pleasure Garden* should be purchased. This hotly contested dispute drew attention to the policies of the McDougall Art Gallery, and emphasised the division between the Society of Arts' more progressive artists and the more conservative members who controlled the Society. It also served to highlight the overlapping administration of the public art gallery and the art society, which had resulted in a rather limited selection of works being purchased or donated to the gallery.

The City Council, in 1949, refused to accept the painting even when offered as a gift to the gallery, on the advice of the art gallery advisory committee. This committee was composed of three members of the Canterbury Society of Arts: Archibald Nicoll, Cecil Kelly and Richard Wallwork. Two of these members had been appointed in 1932, and the third only a few years later. In the course of the dispute this committee was criticised as being "too small and narrow."⁵⁶ The committee's function was to advise the Council on policy; on the purchase of pictures; and the acceptance of gifts for the gallery. But, apart from the

⁵⁵ refer "Work of Frances Hodgkins. Request for No Review. Explanation by Mr W.S. Baverstock", Christchurch Press, October 29, 1948, p 8. Note - Baverstock has not explained the reasons adequately.

⁵⁶ By Mr A.C. Brassington in a submission to the City Council. "Work by Francis Hodgkins. Council Rejects 'The Pleasure Garden'. Deputation Heard Last Evening", Christchurch Press, July 19, 1949.

presentation of the collection made by the Canterbury Society of Arts in 1932, the gallery's collection had received no significant additions.

The painting was finally accepted for the gallery's permanent collection in September 1951. This decision was reached only after considerable public debate in the pages of the Christchurch Press; a petition signed by sixty-nine professors and lecturers of the Canterbury University College had been lodged; and an expanded gallery advisory committee of five members had been formed.⁵⁷

The episode served to focus attention on the sorts of issues which had been raised by the New Zealand Society of Artists, and the reason for the existence of independent exhibiting bodies, such as The Group. It exposed the inadequate administration and policies of the Art Gallery in Christchurch, and the deepening divisions in the Art Society. On the positive side, the episode demonstrated that there was a group of people who were prepared to be outspoken in their support of the development of modern art in New Zealand.

Division occurred and feelings were aroused within The Group. Just prior to the 1949 Group exhibition, two members of The Group, Rona Fleming and Russell Clark, "resigned over the attitude taken by members to their part in the Frances Hodgkins dispute."⁵⁸ Despite this, attendance was up on

⁵⁷ Margaret Frankel, "'The Pleasure Garden' Incident in Christchurch", Yearbook of the Arts in New Zealand, No 5 (ed) H.H. Tombs, Wellington 1949, pp 11-17.

"'The Pleasure Garden'. Painting Accepted by Council. Hanging in McDougall Gallery" Christchurch Press, September 4, 1951.

⁵⁸ Notes for 1949. Group Notebook, in possession of Leo Bensemann.

previous shows. Three radio broadcasts were given by Margaret Frankel, William Sutton and J.A. Johnstone, which discussed The Group's formation and the pictures shown in the exhibition.⁵⁹

THE 1950s

The radio talks were repeated in 1950, with W.A. Sutton and John Oakley each giving a broadcast.

In 1951, The Independent Group from Dunedin exhibited with The Group. A selection from this exhibition was sent up to Wellington, but it was only on display for five days in all.

Margaret Frankel left for Australia in 1951. She had been the most consistent exhibitor with The Group in its early years. She showed works in every exhibition, and had also taken responsibility for keeping track of the finances of many of the early shows.

The 'Friends of The Group' was started up at this time by Mr A.C. Brassington and Mr R.S. Lonsdale. (These two had played a part in the Hodgkins' dispute, coming out strongly in favour of the work.) Other members included Rodney Kennedy and Charles Brasch, who often purchased works from The Group shows. The 'Friends' paid a small annual subscription, and helped The Group in other ways, such as at opening nights and by acting as attendants at the shows.

⁵⁹ Broadcasts were on 3YA and 3ZB. Group Notebook.

THE 1960s AND 1970s

In the 1960s and, particularly, in the 1970s it became apparent that the Group's *raison d'être* had disappeared. The main reason was that there were now more venues where the 'serious' artist could exhibit.

Christchurch's first full-time dealer gallery, Gallery 91, opened in January 1959.⁶³ Like similar galleries which had opened in other centres, such as Helen Hitching's Gallery in Wellington and Peter Webb's Argus House in Auckland, the Brookes (who ran Gallery 91), encouraged group and one-man-shows by New Zealand artists. Painters such as M.T. Woollaston, Colin McCahon, Rita Angus and Olivia Spencer Bower, who had exhibited with The Group, showed at these galleries.

Apart from the growth of dealer galleries, a greater awareness of New Zealand art was fostered by more progressive attitudes of the public art galleries. Auckland City Art Gallery took the lead, firstly under the directorship of Eric Westbrook, followed by P.A. Tomory.⁶⁴ The Gallery organised group exhibitions of contemporary artists' works, and toured them around the country.

The increasing number of dealer galleries which began to operate in the 1960s and 1970s indicates the buying

⁶³ Gordon Brown, New Zealand Painting 1940-1960. Conformity and Dissension, Wellington, Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council 1981, p 52.

⁶⁴ Eric Westbrook was selected as director in January 1952, the first professional director in the country. He resigned in 1955, to be replaced by Tomory. ref G.H. Brown, Conformity and Dissension p 35 ff.

public's recognition and awareness of the professionalism of the country's artists. Roy Cowan, in a radio talk on the subject of dealer galleries in the late 1960s, said:

While an artist, sending to an Art Society, can exhibit and show just one or two things with little risk to himself, there does come a time for the maturing artist when he needs the opportunity for a fuller statement of his ideas; therefore a gallery of his own is necessary.⁶⁵

The same could be said of showing with The Group by the 1970s. Nevertheless, in the early sixties at least, the annual Group shows were still well regarded because,

though the Group show has somewhat outgrown its original purpose and no longer stands out as a lonely beacon among the year's exhibitions, it is still one of the best, for the Group invariably arranges an interesting collection and often introduces new painters to the city with its guest exhibitors.⁶⁶

The Group shows were then still regarded as one of the few opportunities to see a cross-section of contemporary New Zealand art.

However, as artists began to have other exhibition commitments and the type of work which had been shown at Group exhibitions could be seen elsewhere, The Group shows received more criticism. Don Peebles, as critic for the Christchurch Press, wrote in 1967:

The depressed standard noticeable this year makes one ponder the Group's future. There is less really good work now and there are fewer major

⁶⁵ "The Role of the Dealer Gallery in New Zealand", Transcript of a radio talk narrated by Kenneth Blackburn. Clippingbook Vol.V (1967-77), pp 37-48, Turnbull Library (Art Room).

⁶⁶ J.N.K. "Older Members Command Attention in Group Show", Christchurch Press, October 13, 1960, p 17.

works by artists capable of producing them ... The true artist usually works continuously - he is likely to have the work and the need of the individual show, and for him group exhibitions have already become an anachronism.⁶⁷

In 1971, the members decided to attempt to restore The Group "to its former place as the most important exhibition of the year in Christchurch."⁶⁸ It was decided to base the annual exhibitions around a central theme. The theme chosen for that year was "the changes and developments in the works of those who some years ago were familiar",⁶⁸ which meant the guest exhibitors selected were a small group of Canterbury graduates no longer living in the area. In addition, the Frances Hodgkins fellow, and any holder of any other major New Zealand art award, was to be automatically invited to exhibit with The Group.⁶⁹ To improve the presentation of works, and to prevent arguments between members, it was decided to appoint one member to be solely responsible for hanging the shows.⁷⁰

These changes were not enough to keep the shows 'alive'. Increasingly members found themselves with exhibition commitments which precluded them from exhibiting major works in The Group shows. It also became more difficult to organise the shows. For example, some artists had

⁶⁷ D(on) P(eebles), "The Group Shows. 1967", Christchurch Press, Oct. 31, 1967, p 13.

⁶⁸ "The Group Trying to Change Its Image", Christchurch Star, Nov. 17 1971, p 14.

⁶⁹ "New Policy for Group", Christchurch Press, November 9, 1971, p 12. The guests were Tom Kreisler, Ted Bracey, Ted Bulmore and Alister Nisbet-Smith.

⁷⁰ John Coley, "An Invitation to be Hung Here is an Honour".

contractual arrangements with dealer galleries. The dealer rather than the artist had to be consulted before works could be shown.⁷¹ The accounts had also become a much more complicated affair.

Peter Cape described The Group show in 1974 as "simply another artistic shop window." He compared The Group show with the Benson and Hedges Award exhibition, which was on display at the Canterbury Society of Arts at the same time. He concluded that there was little to differentiate the two exhibitions since "both were simply demonstrations of the many facets of current New Zealand painting". He went on to express the hope that in the years to come the exhibitors would show their "latest, most forward-looking and never-before-hung-work", in order that the show could once again be "one of the year's most exciting exhibitions."⁷² In retrospect, the hopes expressed by Cape just serve to illustrate the fact that The Group no longer held an annual 'monopoly' on displaying works which were possibly progressive or experimental in nature.

The criticism levelled against The Group by Rodney Wilson, reviewing the 1975 show, was more serious. He made the claim that because The Group had become part of the conservative establishment, their response to the "threat" of younger talent was to absorb them into this establishment, because an invitation to exhibit with The Group was still regarded as an honour. It had always been harder to become

⁷¹ Ibid. An example was Toss Woollaston, who had been a regular contributor. This aspect also discussed with author by G.T. Moffitt.

⁷² Peter Cape, "Group Gripe", N.Z. Listener, Vol 77, No 1822 (October 26, 1974) p 25.

a member of The Group than to become a working member of an Art Society. An artist had to be invited to join the former, whereas he or she could submit work and apply to join the latter. Because of this honour attached to Group membership, Wilson wrote:

It offers the aspiring artist all the semblances of success, acceptance by colleagues, and apparent attainment. But it is not an incestuous mutual acceptance for which the young artist should be aspiring. It is public acceptance, most especially by the nation's galleries and patrons, and the Group's influence on these is now negligible.⁷³

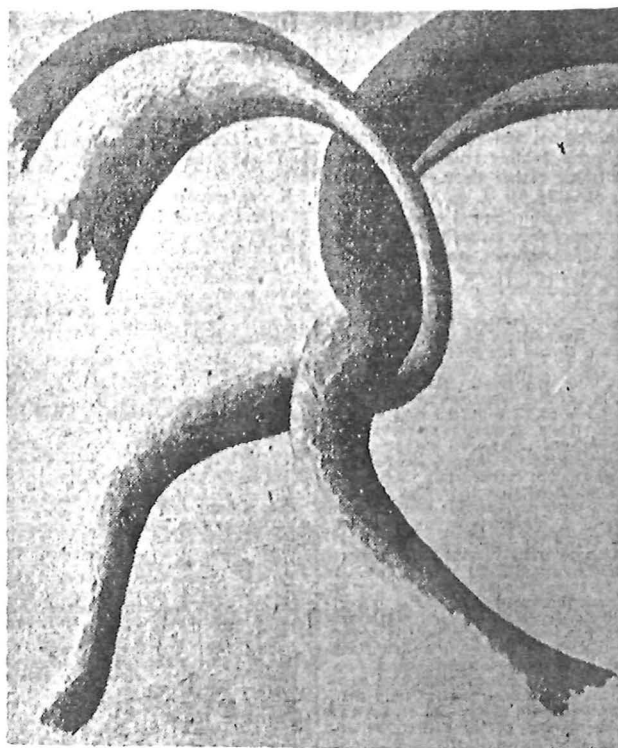
The Group put itself out of existence in 1977, fifty years after it was 'founded'. The final annual exhibition was held at the Canterbury Society of Arts and, at the same time, a retrospective was held in the McDougall Art Gallery. To the last show The Group remained faithful to its original claim, which was to offer an opportunity for artists with distinctive individual styles, to exhibit together works of their own selection. It evolved a reputation for showing the latest, whether it was The Group's intended role or not, but which had arisen as a consequence of showing work by artists who, otherwise, had limited opportunities to exhibit elsewhere.

That the shows failed to arouse the same excitement in later years was an indication that more opportunities for these artists existed. The annual Group show lost its

⁷³ R.L.R(odney) W(ilson), "Modernist Showing at C.S.A. Gallery", Christchurch Press, October 15, 1975, p 12.

importance. Where once Baverstock commented that the Art Society annual exhibitions were "bazaar-like and bewildering", fifty years later The Group show itself was described as "merely disorganised, lacking in unity and cohesion."⁷⁴

⁷⁴ T.L. Rodney Wilson, "The Group Goes Out", N.Z. Listener, Vol 88, No 1987 (January 28, 1978) p 24.



4. Madeline Vyner, *Dance*, 1932, oils.



5. James Cook, *Au Cafe*, pencil.

CHAPTER II

RESPONSES TO THE GROUP, 1929-1947

Part 1 - SALES AND ATTENDANCE

According to W.A. Sutton,

The Group received and gave back a great deal of good-natured contempt from the establishment and the general public. It received support mainly from the intellectuals of Christchurch, but their verbal generosity did not usually extend to their chequebooks, and the Group was not known for its booming sales.¹

This observation provides a good indication of the nature of responses to The Group especially during the first twenty years of its existence.

As already asserted, one of its primary functions was to organise its exhibitions and provide an opportunity for artists to sell their works.

An assessment of The Group's success at attracting the public to view its exhibitions, and at offering a market place for its members' works, must properly be based on complete records from The Group shows. For a true perspective, records of a contemporary 'competing' organisation, in this case the C.S.A, are also required.

Unfortunately, sales and attendance figures for every exhibition held by The Group between 1929 and 1947 have not been located, and - where they do exist - the information

¹ 'Bill' William Alexander Sutton Retrospective 1917-1971, The Dowse Art Gallery, Lower Hutt (28 November 1972 - 11 February 1973) p.5.

content varies depending upon who kept the accounts.² Nevertheless, where they are available, they support Sutton's statement.

Indications are that in some years visitors to the exhibitions were rather fewer in number than the invited guests who attended the openings. Exhibition openings continued to be conducted as formal events until 1947, and resembled those given by the Society of Arts, complete with guest speakers who formally opened the shows. An indication of the pattern of attendance at The Group shows may be gathered from notes on the 1938 show. In the 'Group notebook' it is recorded that two hundred and fifty-eight members of the public visited the exhibition, but the private viewing according to the report in Art in New Zealand was attended by about three hundred guests.³ Although this is the only complete set of information regarding attendance of a particular Group show, it is reasonable to assume from evidence available that a number of the other shows conformed to this pattern. The 'Group notebook' reveals, for example, that over four hundred invitations for the opening were sent out in 1945, and over five hundred the following year. Whilst no figures are given for attendance at these two openings, the accounts indicate that the numbers of the public subsequently visiting these shows were well down on the 1938 show.⁴

² There is a gap in the records for the 1931, 1932, and 1935 shows, for example.

³ 'Group notebook' (accounts and notes about the shows), in possession of Leo Bensemann. "Art Notes, Christchurch", Art in New Zealand, Vol XI, No 1 (September 1938) p 47.

⁴ Figures in the accounts beyond 1938 combine admission (at 6d) and catalogues (at 6d), to give one overall figure, but these are less than 1938.

1938 total ... £	11.18.6d	1945 total ... £	8.0.0d
1940 total ... £	10.18.9d	1946 total ... £	5.18.0d
1943 total ... £	7. 5.0d		

That The Group was affected by the Depression and the Second World War is demonstrated in its records. These show a decrease in the number of visitors attending the exhibitions,⁴ and in sales made during these two periods. In addition, the catalogues reveal that the number of works exhibited also declined. Artists' materials were in very short supply during the war period and this may account for the reduction in the number of works exhibited.

The Group, however, was not alone in this experience. The C.S.A, likewise affected by the Depression and the Second World War, suffered a similar drop in sales as well as a decline in membership.

From the figures available for the period under discussion a direct comparison of sales between The Group and the C.S.A. can only be made for the years 1929, 1938 and 1940. Of the early Group shows, figures for the 1929 exhibition indicate that a modest beginning was made, with six sales made from the one hundred and six works on show (5.7 per cent).⁵ This was not always equalled by the shows in the late 'thirties and early 'forties. Taking into account the economic situation of the time, sales were not likely to have been good in the 'thirties. By way of comparison with the 1929 Group show, records of the 1930 C.S.A annual exhibition list sixty-three sales made from the five hundred and fifty-two works on display (11.4 per cent). Similarly, in 1938, the Society sold proportionally more works than The Group: eight works out of one hundred and twelve (7.1

⁵ Percentages in brackets are works sold out of works shown; C.S.A. sales figures from annotated catalogues in possession of the C.S.A. Not all works displayed in either show were necessarily for sale. Percentages are just to provide an indication and facilitate comparisons.

per cent) were sold from The Group show, while forty-eight of two hundred and sixty-eight (17.9 per cent) works shown were sold at the C.S.A. However, as the latter figures denote, fewer works were actually being shown at the Society; which - as in The Group exhibitions - seems to have been the trend over the nineteen-thirties and early 'forties.⁶

In 1940, the gap narrowed with The Group selling five out of ninety-seven works (5.2 per cent) and the C.S.A. only twenty-eight works out of the two hundred and ninety-six exhibited (9.5 per cent). However, these figures for the three years under discussion demonstrate that The Group obviously could not match the Society for total sales.

The cost of mounting The Group shows in this period was never met by revenue from commissions on the small number of works sold, for The Group not only sold proportionally fewer works than the C.S.A, but the average sale price was also lower. At the conclusion of each exhibition, the deficit was met by the members in the form of a levy. The C.S.A, on the other hand, whilst suffering a drop in revenue from sales and attendance during the Depression and war periods, could fall back on the money it received from the annual subscriptions of its working and associate members.

The sales records confirm that those who purchased works of art in this period still regarded the annual ex-

⁶ CSA 1929 552 works shown 1932 329 works shown
 1931 395 works shown 1938 268 works shown

hibitions of the C.S.A as the principal art market, particularly since the membership of the C.S.A included older, well-established artists whose works would have sold more readily than those of the often younger, lesser-known and sometimes more experimental members of The Group.

The sales made at the first NZSoA show and the C.S.A annual exhibition in 1933 make for an interesting comparison, because the NZSoA made a special point of trying out new marketing methods. The extent and novelty of the methods employed demonstrate the keenness of the artists of the 'thirties to increase sales and explore ways of marketing their works. It also supports the assertion that marketing was a prime motive for forming both The Group and the NZSoA. The degree of the NZSoA's success may be gauged from the following figures: twenty-two works were sold at the First General Exhibition of the NZSoA, out of the two hundred and seventy-six works which were shown⁷ (8.0 per cent); while at the C.S.A's annual exhibition twenty-nine sales were made from three hundred and thirty-eight works (8.6 per cent). An auction sale of forty-one donated works (some of which were included in the exhibition) conducted on the final day boosted the sales of the NZSoA even more. One newspaper report claimed that an auction sale had never before been included with an exhibition.⁸ The auction, however, did not raise as much money as members had hoped,

⁷ "Art Exhibition Closes. Society of Artists. Many Works Sold", Christchurch Press, November 6, 1933, p 10.

⁸ "Auction Sale of Pictures. Society of Artists Hold Exhibition", Christchurch Sun, November 1, 1933, p 7.

and the buyers were, with few exceptions, the members of the same organisation.⁹

The auction sale was but one of the methods the NZSoA tried for selling works of art. One of its purchasing incentives was an offer of 20 per cent off the catalogue price of a work, to members and subscribers of the organisation. Another was

... the provision that where anyone liked a picture that was on view, but was unwilling to pay the marked price, a written bid could be received and sent to the artist, who might see his way to accept it.¹⁰

At a meeting held before the second exhibition, a motion was passed which permitted the purchasing of paintings on a time payments basis.¹¹

Apart from these buying incentives, the amount of publicity the NZSoA generated (which was considerably more than The Group shows ever enjoyed) may have stimulated sales. The Society was also able to draw on a wider range of contributors from all over New Zealand for its exhibitions. Nevertheless, an analysis of the sales shows that the local members benefited far more than the exhibitors from further afield, possibly because patrons were more familiar with the Canterbury artists' work.

This first NZSoA exhibition was very well attended. The Times exclaimed: "all records are now broken, over

⁹ Christchurch Press, November 6, 1933, p 10, lists works sold, and their purchasers.

¹⁰ "N.Z. Society of Artists. Purposes described. Opening of Clubrooms" Christchurch Press, October 19, 1933, p 10.

¹¹ "Society of Artists. Monthly Meeting", Christchurch Press, October 20, 1934, p 28.

five hundred visited the show yesterday."¹² This followed an attendance of over four hundred visitors on the previous day.¹³ Either day's attendance was greater than the overall numbers who visited Group shows.

In an especial effort to attract younger visitors to the exhibition and to arouse their interest in art, an essay competition was arranged for school pupils with two prizes of paintings. In addition, F.A. Shurrock gave a lecture at the exhibition.¹⁴

The Society did not receive as much attention from the news media on the occasion of its second exhibition as it did not go to such lengths to achieve a high attendance; so it remains to be determined whether this show was as successful as the first. Dissension within the Society led to its dissolution five months later.

It is difficult to make any conclusive comparison of those who sold works in The Group shows and at the C.S.A, as there is information available only about the 1938 and 1940 Group and C.S.A exhibitions, respectively. In these years eight members of The Group also showed at

¹² "Society of Artists. Successful Exhibition. Another Large Attendance", Christchurch Times, November 3, 1933, p 11.

¹³ "Art Exhibition", Christchurch Times, November 2, 1933, p 5.

¹⁴ "Art Exhibition. Much Interest Aroused", Christchurch Press, October 30, 1933, p 7.

the C.S.A annual exhibitions. In 1938 Olivia Spencer Bower and Phyllis Drummond Bethune (*née* Sharpe) sold works in both exhibitions; and in 1940 Rita Angus made sales in both. In the 1938 Group show Rita Angus sold four works, which was half the total number of sales for that exhibition. (Her two exhibits at the C.S.A in 1938 were both 'not-for-sale'.) Louise Henderson sold three works in The Group's 1940 show, but none in the C.S.A show for that year.

Painters such as Olivia Spencer Bower, Evelyn Page and Phyllis Drummond Bethune, in particular, seem to have sold equally well at either exhibition venue.¹⁵ While no accounts are available for the 1931, 1932 and 1935 Group shows, the C.S.A 'sale catalogues' for the years 1930 to 1935 record that Olivia Spencer Bower and Phyllis Drummond Bethune both sold works in a number of the Society's exhibitions before they became members of The Group.

It is more difficult to evaluate an artist such as Rita Angus in this respect, because some years she would exhibit in one show and not the other; for example, in 1943 she showed with The Group and sold three works out of the total of four sales made, but did not exhibit at the C.S.A that year. The other factor to be consid-

¹⁵ For example, Page sold one work in the 1929 Group show, two in the 1930 C.S.A exhibition, and one in the 1932 C.S.A exhibition.

Phyllis Drummond Bethune (*née* Sharpe) made sales in the 1930; 1932; 1933 and 1935 C.S.A exhibitions; Olivia Spencer Bower made sales in 1932; 1934 and 1935.

ered is that often a significant proportion of her works would be marked 'not-for-sale' in either The Group or C.S.A exhibitions, or both. However, even ignoring these two factors, records show that in the five years either side of 1940 she sold a greater proportion of works at Group exhibitions than any other member.

By the late nineteen-thirties there were a few artists who showed with The Group but not with the C.S.A. For instance, Leo Bensemann had stopped showing at the C.S.A by the 1940 Group show. He made one sale in this show and another in 1943, the only other sale apart from Rita Angus's three sales in 1943. Woollaston was another artist who did not exhibit at the C.S.A, but, unlike Bensemann, he sold no works in the period under review.¹⁶ McCahon first exhibited with The Group in 1940, and while he did not show at the C.S.A, he exhibited one or two works a year from 1939 until 1943 at the Otago Art Society's annual exhibitions. He, like Woollaston, appears to have sold nothing from Group exhibitions before the nineteen-fifties. The lack of sales experienced by artists such as Field, McCahon and Woollaston was the result of a combination of factors including - perhaps - the Christchurch public's unfamiliarity with their work, and a corresponding hesitancy on the part of critics to deal with their works in reviews, because they exhibited 'modern tendencies'.

¹⁶ He did start to sell after this though; for example, he sold two works in 1949 at the Group show.

As Sutton's statement indicated, an artist could expect psychological support rather than financial reward from membership in The Group. It did succeed, however, in giving younger artists public exposure and the support from their peers which they might not otherwise have enjoyed. But as the examination of The Group's accounts revealed, the exhibitions did not function particularly well as sales venues for the majority of members, because they were often lesser known, younger artists or were considered experimental and *avant-garde*. Thus, the annual exhibitions of the C.S.A remained the principal art market.

Generally speaking, those artists whose works sold at Group exhibitions also made sales elsewhere.

Part II - THE CRITICAL RESPONSE

Throughout the period under review, The Group shows were favourably received by critics. Aspects which particularly attracted the praise of critics were the method of exhibiting, and the variety of work the shows contained, which in this early period of The Group's existence was still considered a positive factor.

Christchurch possessed reviewers of varying competence as critics. Reviewers of The Group and NZSoA shows included Professor J. Shelley, 'Chiaroscuro', 'Conrad', F.A. Shurrock and Frederick Page in the early nineteen-thirties; 'Charles Grignon' and A.R.D. Fairburn in the nineteen-forties. There were others who remained anonymous.

Those who put their 'names'¹⁷ to reviews displayed at least some knowledge of the subject at hand, and often demonstrated a familiarity with the development of the styles of Christchurch-based artists. Professor J. Shelley, for instance, had a wide knowledge of art, and had lectured on the subject at the School of Art.

Generally speaking, the various newspaper reviews indicate that during the nineteen-thirties and 'forties critics responded principally to technique, use of colour and line and perhaps the degree of simplification employed. This suggests that the local critics were possibly aware of the theories of Clive Bell and Roger Fry and their writings on art, at least in so far as the critics concentrated mainly on pictorial phenomena rather than attempting to elucidate subject matter.

In the nineteen-thirties and 'forties reviews of Group exhibitions are to be found mainly in the Christchurch newspapers. The NZSoA, on the other hand, was reviewed both in the local newspapers and in Art in New Zealand. Notices, where they appeared on The Group in this journal, tended to be little more than a reiteration of statements made by newspaper reviewers. In 1931 and 1932 Art in New Zealand featured reviews of Group shows, and an article which restated The Group's policies also appeared in 1945. Otherwise all other items on The Group and its shows are to be found in the "Art-Notes" section, which at best was composed of quotations from newspaper reviews. Equal if not more attention

¹⁷ I have not identified who 'Chiaroscuro' was. 'Charles Grignon' is a pseudonym. Leo Bensemann believes that this critic was the wife of Mr Leicester Webb. (He opened the 1940 Group show.)

is devoted to the openings and speakers' comments.

Illustrations of works which were exhibited in the 1929, 1931, 1932 and 1940 shows appeared in the journal. Photographs also accompanied the article in 1945, but two out of the three illustrations were works exhibited by members of the Rutland Group. The illustrations which appeared in Art in New Zealand do not particularly favour any one member of The Group, and if anything tend to demonstrate graphically the variety of work shown at Group exhibitions.

The speeches delivered at The Group show openings were also reported in the papers and occasionally incorporated into the reviews. Statements made in these speeches were perhaps more responsible for the development of ideas about The Group than comments made by critics. The latter often failed to discover in the works on display, qualities which were provocative or which expressed the spirit of revolt and experiment extolled by the guest speakers. The point that needs emphasis is that The Group was a body of artists with no overall unity of intention or stylistic approach. The Group shows' contributors, particularly in the nineteen-thirties, were a mixture of younger artists, some of whom were prepared to experiment, some who tended to pursue more conventional lines; and others who were of an older generation with established careers and styles behind them. The difficulty in assessing the criticism of these artists lies in the fact that The Group had no identifiable 'group consciousness'. This meant that it was difficult for the critics to make generalisations, with two

exceptions: the first concerns their method of display and their motives for the separate exhibitions; and the second the critics' discernment of certain similarities in approach to landscape painting by a number of Canterbury-based artists - that style which in retrospect is often referred to as the 'Canterbury School', with some justification.

There was an optimism, if not realisation by the critics and guest speakers alike, that the form The Group's shows took would lead to the production of work which would "challenge conventions" and expand the boundaries of art expression in New Zealand.

The most interesting aspects of the reviews are, first, the extent to which critics understood and appreciated the underlying motives for The Group's existence, and how successful they believed The Group was in fulfilling its aims, and, second, the critics' recognition of similarities of style and intention amongst a number of Canterbury-based members of The Group in the nineteen-thirties. However, a discussion of these Canterbury painters neglects the exhibitors whose works critics found the most 'experimental' or 'provocative'. It was arguably the latter artists' works which were responsible for The Group evolving a reputation for showing the more forward-looking art. For this reason the response of critics to these artists' works must also be accounted for in a discussion of the criticism of The Group. It was such a loosely knit association of artists and, over the years, comprised so many artists,

that it is more profitable to look at the aforementioned aspects, than attempt to assess the critics' response to each and every Group exhibitor.

The Group did not issue a manifesto; the closest it came to a proclamation of intent was Baverstock's statement in Art in New Zealand. Unlike Basil Honour's statement of the reasons which led to the formation of the NZSoA, which appeared in the form of an article and was thereby assured of more attention, Baverstock's statement was placed amongst other notes on art-related events in Christchurch, at the back of the journal. The Christchurch papers contained numerous references to the formation and intentions of the NZSoA before the organisation even held its first general exhibition. Thus the critics had plenty of information on which to base their evaluation of the success (or otherwise) of the show with respect to the fulfillment of its aims. Baverstock's statement about The Group appeared in the September 1929 issue of Art in New Zealand, and the 1929 exhibition was opened on the 10th September. Critics, therefore, had little opportunity to become acquainted with The Group's intentions. Nevertheless, critics were quick to appreciate the idea behind the formation of The Group, and the essence of The Group's exhibitions. But prompted by comments made by guest speakers, such as Dr G.M.L. Lester, at the exhibition openings, critics assumed and consequently promoted the idea that the artists involved in The Group "represented

a spirit of revolt and experiment";¹⁸ and - as indicated earlier- this view persisted for much of The Group's existence. Of the critics who wrote reviews on The Group in the early 'thirties, 'Chiaroscuro' actually came closest to describing the essence of The Group then, when he/she wrote:

It is a mistake to assume that the 1931 Group ... comprises a rebellious circle against accepted forms of art. Nor is there any definite aesthetic synthesis distinguishing The Group; sincerity in individual outlooks is the bond and the ground for concord.¹⁹

The reasons critics and speakers supported the separate exhibitions were several. Dr Lester encouraged the idea that the Society of Arts promoted art which pandered to the public's taste in art rather than encouraging the expression of the real spirit of the age. He believed the artist's ambition was primarily to express himself, not to indulge the public with the sole aim of achieving fame.²⁰ The smaller exhibitions, he believed:

Are gathered together by people who love art, young folk who have tried to master by hard work the technicalities of their subject. They are full of adventurous spirit, and that is why this exhibition is far more exciting and interesting than the annual one.²¹

¹⁸ "The 1931 Group's Exhibition of work is opened at the Art Gallery" Christchurch Sun, September 10, 1931, p.3. Dr Lester was the guest speaker.

¹⁹ Chiaroscuro, "Impressive Exhibition at Art Gallery. Sculpture and Paintings by 1931 Group", Christchurch Sun, September 10, 1931, p. 7.

²⁰ "Painting and Sculpture. Work of the 1931 Group. Exhibition at Art Gallery", Christchurch Press, September 10, 1931, p. 13.

²¹ "Modern Trend in Art. Exhibition Launched. Dr Lester Depreciates Victorian Taste. Work of the 1935 Group", Christchurch Star-Sun, October 9, 1935, p. 5.

Professor J. Shelley appears to have been keen to encourage an alternative to the annual exhibitions at the C.S.A. A part of this interest seems to have been an optimism about the potential of break-away groups of artists. At the opening of The Group's 1929 exhibition he commented that changes and progress were accomplished by the vigour of groups of artists who were prepared to challenge conventions. He cited the example of the Pre-Raphaelites to support his view.²² In 1932, Shelley's opening address described his trip to the United States and his impressions of American art. He acknowledged that representational methods had been set aside far more than in New Zealand, but he believed:

that the standard was not better than the standard of the major part of that shown here (at the Group show).

He said in conclusion that:

he was prepared to find in the work of artists in Christchurch just as much as anywhere, the beginning of a new movement.²³

His interest in alternatives was put into practice when he became the foundation president of the NZSoA the following year.

In his review of the 1929 exhibition Shelley wrote:

²² "Private View at Art Gallery", Christchurch Times, September 10, 1929, p 3.

²³ "Art in America. Supremacy of Modern Manner. Address by Professor Shelley", Christchurch Press, September 6, 1932, p 7.

It is interesting and heartening to think that Christchurch possesses a vigorous group of artists who feel that the annual exhibition of the Society of Arts does not give them sufficient chance to say what they feel they must say.²⁴

Such comparisons with the exhibitions of the Society of Arts were inevitable. Features of The Group shows that were not policies of the C.S.A and which repeatedly attracted critics' praise were the hanging and arrangement of works, and the absence of a selection committee. This absence of a jury, which meant that The Group exhibited all the works sent in by artists, was consistently commented on in reviews up until the Retrospective Show in 1947. Reviewers noted with satisfaction that the artists could be their own critics with respect to deciding what to show, and yet still produce an exhibition of generally high quality.

Comments such as those made by the critic for the Christchurch Times writing about the 1932 Group show were not untypical.

Possibly there are paintings here that the committee of the Society of Arts would ban from a Society exhibition. This exhibition, therefore, is probably a good deal more representative of what our artists are really doing than would be the larger and more formal displays.²⁵

It was thought that in an exhibition where the artist selected his or her own work, more experimental works would be shown, and therefore such an exhibition would serve "a

²⁴ Professor J. Shelley, "The 1929 Group Exhibition of Paintings", Christchurch Times, September 10, 1931, p 14.

²⁵ "A Good Display. Work of the 1932 Group. This Year's Exhibition", Christchurch Times, September 6, 1932, p 3.

valuable purpose in providing for the expression of the real spirit of the age."²⁶

Critics realised that an appreciation of the general aims and ideas of individual artists could be more easily gained when the works of each artist were hung together in a group. They also noticed that a greater sense of individuality was apparent in smaller exhibitions. The hanging arrangements employed by The Group only served to heighten this impression, since the viewer had far more opportunity of becoming acquainted with the style of artist, before he or she moved on to the next artist's display. As Shelley pointed out, in a larger exhibition such as those held by the C.S.A, where no such hanging arrangement prevailed, "the medley of different styles and capacities is apt to produce a feeling of fatigued indifference."²⁷ He suggested that the hanging committee of the C.S.A would benefit from examining the method of display employed by The Group, for

there is a simplicity and clarity for which the spectator is very thankful and his mind is prepared to consider more sympathetically the personal outlook of each painter. There is an intimacy almost amounting to personal confidences between the painter and spectator.²⁸

The NZSoA employed basically the same hanging arrangements as The Group, and these were examined at some length by

²⁶ "Taste in Victorian and Present Day. Exhibition by the 1935 Group", Christchurch Press, October 9, 1935, p 16.

²⁷ Professor J. Shelley, "The 1929 Group. Exhibition of Paintings", Christchurch Times, September 10, 1929, p 14.

²⁸ Professor J. Shelley, "Exhibition at Art Gallery. The 1931 Group. Work of Importance", Christchurch Times, September 14, 1931, p 2.

Frederick Page in his reviews of the 1933 and 1934 NZSoA exhibitions. One of his comments was that

the belief of hanging committees that the eye can select from walls crowded and muddled with canvases the few good pictures that might possibly be there is a belief that practice will not hold. Order and arrangement are as necessary in the hanging of pictures as order and arrangement in the pictures themselves.²⁹

Despite the example of The Group's and NZSoA's method of exhibiting and the favourable response of the critics, the C.S.A made no immediate changes to its hanging policy.

The idea of revolt was sown mainly by the opening speeches. The critics often had some difficulty in determining whether this was actually reflected in the work exhibited. But because The Group was an independent body of artists, it is not surprising that critics and guest speakers were prompted to suggest that the artists of The Group presented the "new school" and that "much of the work that is usually on view (at the C.S.A) is mannered in the older school."³⁰

The majority of members of The Group were also regular exhibitors at the C.S.A and often other art societies as well. They were, however, generally younger artists. Aside from the different display procedures employed by The Group, its shows had looked very different from the annual exhibitions of the C.S.A, for they would have included proportionally more work of an advanced nature, as well as work in

²⁹ Frederick Page, "N.Z. Society of Artists", Art in New Zealand, Vol VI, No 2 (December 1933) p 91.

³⁰ "Exhibition of Paintings. The 1932 Group. Modern Spirit Shown", Christchurch Press, September 6, 1932, p 11; and "1932 Group Exhibition", Art in New Zealand, Vol V, No 18 (December 1932) p 97.

a much greater range of media.

Most members of the NZSoA, as with The Group, also participated in art society exhibitions. Its two exhibitions, however, bore more resemblance to those held by The Group. Nevertheless Frederick Page wrote in his review of the first NZSoA exhibition:

As for the 'modern movement' and 'present tendencies in New Zealand Art' that the show is said to illustrate, we came away from the show wondering what all such talk was about. For here were many paintings, wood- and lino-cuts, drawings and so on, that had an essential and recognisable quality of rightness.³¹

Although he did note in his review of the two 1934 exhibitions of the NZSoA that while overseas developments seeped into New Zealand 'very quietly', he could detect that a change in New Zealand art had occurred within the last five years.³²

The features which critics identified as modern tendencies to be found in the work of some of the younger generation of painters, were the simplification of the elements which made up the subject matter, and the often corresponding employment of bold or unmodulated colour areas in the composition. While we now tend to associate these features with the work of artists such as Rita Angus, Rata Lovell-Smith, Leo Bensemann, Louise Henderson and Christopher Perkins in the nineteen-thirties and 'forties, it must be pointed out that the critics in the

³¹ Art in New Zealand, Vol VI, No 2 (December 1933) p 91.

³² Frederick Page, "N.Z. Society of Artists Exhibition", Art in New Zealand, Vol VII, No 2 (December 1934) p 80.

early nineteen-thirties also alluded to artists as diverse as R.N. Field, Edith Collier, Evelyn Page and Cora Wilding in this way. 'Simplification' of colour and tone, and the abandonment of inessential detail were often referred to in the reviews of the earliest shows as a decorative approach, regardless of whether artists worked in an impressionistic style where forms are broken up by colour patches, or whether artists demonstrated in their work a concentration on the essential patterns of a motif, synthesised into broad unmodulated colour shapes. For example, Evelyn Page's painting *December Moon* shown in the 1929 exhibition was described by Professor Shelley as

a finely composed piece of decorative realism - real enough for us to enjoy the brilliant sunshine and decorative enough to suggest that it might be called 'Variations in Green and Pink'. There is a bold simplification of colour and tone which produces a most happy unity.³³

Evelyn Page's approach in a work like this is reminiscent of French Impressionism, and even though the colours used are restricted to related tones of greens, mauves and pinks, she has applied the paint in dashes and strokes. The result is somewhat different from the simplification employed by artists such as Rata Lovell-Smith or Rita Angus, whose works do not exhibit such a fluid handling of paint. Yet within the space of about two years, Shelley began to make a distinction, and the kind of simplification employed by artists such as Rata Lovell-Smith began to be

³³ Christchurch Times, September 10, 1929, p 14.

December Moon, oil on canvas 783 x 595 mm, coll. Robert McDougall Art Gallery.

1929 Group Cat. No 31.



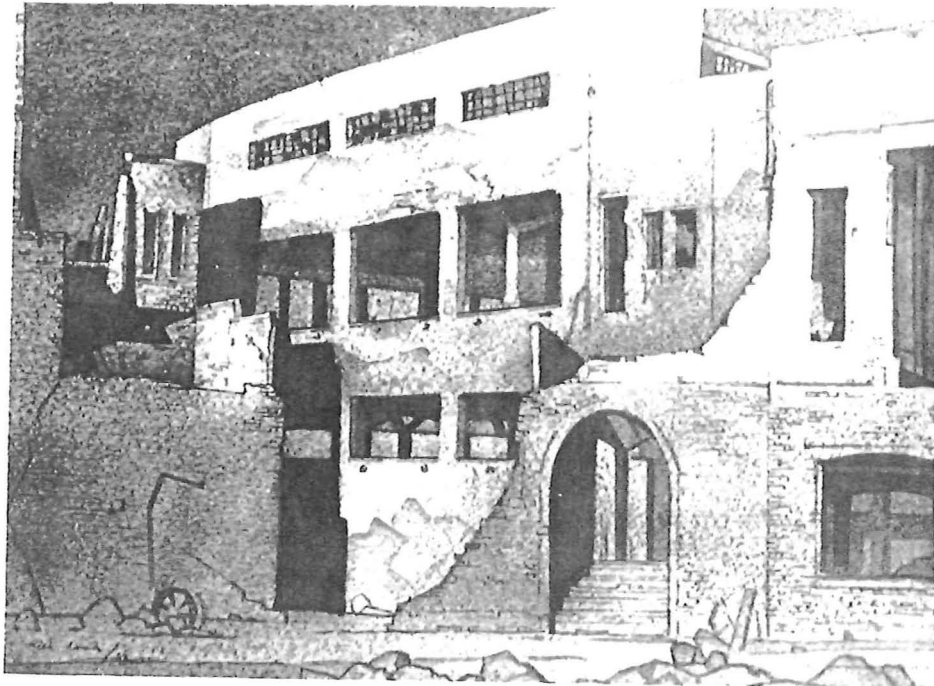
6. Christopher Perkins, *Meditation (Woman on the Shore)*, 1931, oil on canvas, 90.8 x 71 cm
(Auckland City Art Gallery)



7. Christopher Perkins, *Silverstream Brickworks*, 1930, oil, 61 x 50.8 cm. (now destroyed)



8. Alfred Cook, *Ruins, Napier*. etching.



9. Rita Angus, *Blythes Building, Napier*. 1932, watercolour, 26.2 x 37.0 cm.
(Christchurch Polytechnic on loan to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery)

equated with the 'modern artist's approach'. When Shelley opened the first exhibition of the NZSoA in 1933, he observed that

examples would be seen of the tendency to greater simplification in the work of the modern artists. They were getting at the essentials, at the architecture of reality. That was the dominant character of modern painting. Even colour took on form, and was not used as mere representational variety.³⁴

Here he comes close to a description of the tendencies which were coming to the fore in the work of some of the younger generation of Canterbury painters.

Few general comments could be made about The Group artists' styles with the exception of those who exhibited in their works a tendency towards a broader treatment of the landscape, which in retrospect is associated with the development of a regionalist style in New Zealand. But while critics did notice these stylistic tendencies, more often than not they were associated with a response to New Zealand light conditions rather than the isolation of patterns and shapes in landscape for compositional or decorative effect. Broad, flat areas of colour, either outlined tonally, or in direct juxtaposition used to emphasize these effects, certainly created the impression of brightness and clarity of light which critics came to regard as a more truthful approach to the New Zealand landscape.

Christopher Perkins has often been cited as a forerunner in this process of coming to terms with the New

³⁴ "N.Z. Society of Artists. First Exhibition Opened. Stimulating Work", Christchurch Press, October 27, 1933, p.12.

Zealand light. He exhibited in the 1932 Group show and the 1933 NZSoA exhibition. The critic for the Christchurch Press in 1932 described Perkins's *Silverstream Brickworks* as "a composition of rounded hill shapes with the right lines of buildings and tall chimneys" which "gives the impression of typical New Zealand light."³⁵ The creation of the latter impression was most likely a secondary consideration for Perkins since his primary aim was to impose a balanced design onto the motif, in line with his interest in Roger Fry's theories. For example, in this work, a repeated pattern of hillshapes is balanced by the carefully arrayed geometric forms of the brickworks in the foreground.³⁶

The extent of Perkins's influence on New Zealand artists, both with respect to his choice of subject matter - man-made structures in natural settings - and his stylistic approach, is still a matter for debate. The paintings which he exhibited in The Group show and in the NZSoA exhibition the following year, may have acted as catalysts inspiring other artists to adopt a similar stylistic approach. The local critics, however, did not identify Perkins as being the only artist whose approach to landscape depiction represented the clarity of New Zealand light. The same critic who noticed the "impression of typical New Zealand light" in Perkins's work in the 1932 exhibition, also noted that

³⁵ Christchurch Press, September 6, 1932, p 11.
Silverstream Brickworks 61 x 50.8 cm (now destroyed)
 1932 Group Exhibition, Cat No.66

³⁶ Ref. Recent Works by Christopher Perkins, Catalogue of Exhibition in Kirkcaldie & Stains Gallery, November 7-28, and a Monograph by Prof. P.W. Robertson, Wellington, 1931, p 7-8; and Christopher Perkins, "The New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, Wellington. 41st Annual Exhibition." Art in New Zealand, vol II, No 6 (December 1929) p 132.

Mrs Rita Cook (Angus) and Mr Alfred Cook see New Zealand in a way that contrasts greatly with the work of those who concern themselves with finding a fragment of landscape of the popular "English" type, and who paint it in a manner suited to that type. Rita Cook's *Mt Stewart* (No 70) and Alfred's Cook's *Mt Grey* (No 93) please by their solidity of form and clear light, as do their studies of ruined buildings.³⁷

Rata Lovell-Smith's style already showed a tendency toward simplification by 1932. She showed with the NZSoA in 1933 and 1934, and joined The Group the following year. Her work had frequently been described in a condemnatory fashion by critics as poster-like because of the boldness of her design.³⁸ However, the critics of the NZSoA and Group shows consistently praised Rata Lovell-Smith for her approach to landscape subjects. Of her exhibits in the first NZSoA exhibition, Frederick Page commented that she "catches part of the perfect clarity and freedom that a fine day in Canterbury gives,"³⁹ and Shurrock in another review described "her clear incisions into the native character and quality of New Zealand landscape" as being "unwatered by traditions of the England landscapists."⁴⁰

By the following year, critics were no longer isolating one or two artists whose works were associated with capturing the essence of the native landscape, for in at least two reviews of the NZSoA critics discuss stylistic quali-

9³⁷ Christchurch Press, September 6, 1932, p 11. E.g. also Rita Angus, *Blythe's Building, Napier* (1932) water colour 262 x 370 mm. Coll. Christchurch Polytechnic on loan to Robert McDougall Art Gallery, 1932 Group, Cat. No 71.

³⁸ Ref. Ann Elias, "The Landscape Paintings of Rata Lovell-Smith", *Art in New Zealand*, No 26, pp 34-35.

³⁹ *Art in New Zealand*, Vol VI, No 2 (December 1933) p 92.

⁴⁰ F.A. Shurrock, "Art Exhibition", *Christchurch Times*, October 30, 1933, p 13.

ties common to a number of artists. 'Conrad' of the Christchurch Press commented that

though no particular artistic policy is enforced from without there is a kinship in the outlook shown by all the exhibitors ... This characteristic is manifest chiefly in a feeling for the solidity of natural forms whether in landscape or figures, in simplification, in emphasis on draughtsmanship and subtleties of living light and colour, and in accurate observation which enables them to see New Zealand landscape as it is and not as a reflection of English landscape.⁴¹

'Chiaroscuro' made similar observations and suggested that these artists were making an important contribution toward a "national school of landscape".⁴² When the NZSoA dissolved, The Group became a focus for painters exhibiting these stylistic tendencies in their works. The local critics' awareness of stylistic similarities can be illustrated by two examples drawn from Group show reviews. In each case the critic has distinguished particular stylistic tendencies, and has used them to link certain artists together.

The Christchurch Press critic of the 1935 Group show associated Ngaio Marsh, Louise Henderson and Phyllis Drummond Bethune with Rata Lovell-Smith, since they showed similar tendencies in their paintings. Of Lovell-Smith the critic observed that she

has become known for a simple and direct treatment of landscape. She was practically a pioneer in this way of seeing and representing the Canterbury

⁴¹ Conrad, "N.Z. Society of Artists Annual Exhibition" (1) Christchurch Press, October 26, 1934, p 24.

⁴² Chiaroscuro, "N.Z. Landscape School is Emerging. Paintings in Exhibition of Society of Artists. Diversity in Points of View" (2) Christchurch Sun, October 31, 1934, p 8.

countryside ... A closely woven pattern, crisp light and lively colour are seen in *Through the Trees*.⁴³

Ngaio Marsh's paintings are described in the same review as "dramatic" because of her "use of strong colours and hard light". But obviously the critic saw Rata Lovell-Smith as the forerunner of this approach.

In the second example, in 1938 the critic for the Christchurch Press, grouping Rita Angus, Leo Bensemann and Olivia Spencer Bower together on the basis of their drawing and decorative sense, was reminded of the mood of Japanese prints. Further into the review, the critic used a comparison of portraits to support his ideas.

19 He compared Evelyn Page's *Charles Brasch* with Rita Angus's *Harvey Gresham* and Leo Bensemann's *Portrait of Lawrence Baigent*. Page's work was "strongly handled and impresses by its direct treatment of the face." Her subject's torso, and the background, are sketched in with hatching strokes, while the poet's head is more carefully and fully modelled and this has the effect of drawing the observer's attention to the face. The feature which differentiates Rita Angus's and Leo Bensemann's portraits from Page's is that

the underlying draughtsmanship is more apparent. Rita Cook's (Angus) *Harvey Gresham* (No 99) is carefully worked and succeeds mainly by its good drawing. Leo Bensemann's portraits particularly No 101 (*Lawrence Baigent*) are striking in effect, with their smooth colour and fine gradations of tone.⁴⁴

⁴³ "Taste in Art. Victorian and Present Day. Exhibition by 'The 1935 Group'", Christchurch Press, October 9, 1935, p 16.

⁴⁴ "Modern Artists. Work of the 1938 Group. Originality and Skill", Christchurch Press, August 23, 1938, p 3.

Evelyn Page, *Charles Brasch* (1937) oil, 609 x 495 mm. Coll. University of Otago.

Rita Angus's portrait of Harvey Gresham has not been located, but an examination of other portraits, such as that of Leo Bensemann (1938) executed at this time, reveal a clear-cut linear style.⁴⁵ Shaded tonal areas serve to emphasize edges and lines, which in turn are used to create rhythms. Meticulous draughtsmanship and tonal outlines were also a feature of Bensemann's work.

Skill in drawing and careful regard for detail were also a feature of the work of Alfred Cook and, more particularly, of his brother James Cook. The two Cook brothers were, incidentally, amongst those considered as the 'younger generation of artists' but in whose works reviewers had difficulty in perceiving expressions of "revolt and experiment".

In the 1930s and '40s, the critics had noted that certain features were shared by a number of Canterbury-based painters, such as an emphasis on draughtsmanship and, in paintings, the use of line or simple masses of colour articulated by tonal gradations to define form. These qualities could be seen to a greater or lesser extent in the work of the Cook brothers (although they had both left New Zealand by the mid 'thirties), Rita Angus, Ngaio Marsh, Louise Henderson, Rata Lovell-Smith, Phyllis Drummond Bethune, Leo Bensemann, Olivia Spencer Bower,

⁴⁵ Rita Angus, *Leo Bensemann*, oil on canvas, 360 x 300 mm, Rita Angus Loan coll. National Art Gallery.

and in some of the painters who joined in the late 'forties such as Juliet Peter and Dorothy Manning. In the late nineteen-thirties and early nineteen-forties these artists represented slightly less than half the contributors to The Group's shows. This suggests that perhaps there may be a recognisable 'Canterbury Style', and as previously noted the critics of The Group shows did draw attention to similar tendencies in the work of these artists. Leo Bensemann, however, maintains that there was never a 'school' as such, but rather "a response to the landscape, its peculiar forms and the atmospheric conditions which prevail in the Canterbury area."⁴⁶ His comments do not, however, adequately explain the apparent similarity of style, or "response", amongst particular Group members.

They all received in common some or all of their formal art training from the Canterbury College School of Art. James Cook, Louise Henderson and Rata Lovell-Smith subsequently held teaching positions there.

Several members - Evelyn Page, Rita Angus, Bill Sutton, Ngaio Marsh and M.T. Woollaston - have recorded their impressions of the instruction they received at the School. In all their accounts the type of education that was available is described as being of an academic nature. Page's recollections are typical:

What I got from these years was a grounding in academic studies; studies from the antique, life classes, painting from life, landscapes, with set rules of composition.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ In conversation with the author, June 24, 1983.

⁴⁷ "Evelyn Page - Biography", Evelyn Page Retrospective Exhibition. National Art Gallery and NZ Academy of Fine Arts, Wellington, p 7.

In a series of notes which Rita Angus prepared for a publication (Gil Docking's Two Hundred Years of New Zealand Painting), she cites as the influences on her work, the academic training she received at the Art School. The teachers mentioned by her are Richard Wallwork, Archibald Nicoll, Cecil Kelly, Leonard Booth, James Cook and Professor Shelley. She wrote

From these lessons came the source for paintings, draughtsmanship, colour, tone, and form (Auckland)* ... My way was clear from student days.⁴⁸

(* Angus had a term at Elam studying form from Fisher.)

Her interest in Medieval and Renaissance painting was aroused through Shelley's art history lectures. His reviews suggest that he discussed works of art from a formalist point of view. This emphasis on formal qualities by Shelley and other art critics in the late 'twenties and nineteen-thirties would have influenced the way Angus and other artists looked at paintings, and affected the choice of qualities which they in turn sought to introduce into their own work.

Angus noted that the students were "taught an accuracy of observation and to make notes."⁴⁹ Ngaio Marsh's description of Richard Wallwork's life drawing instruction supports this statement:

... his attitudes were those of a vigorous but conventional London school. Nevertheless, his students learned the fundamental elements of

⁴⁸ Rita Angus MS Papers 1399, Folder 2:1 : 1-3. Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

drawing and the necessity for exhaustive self-criticism.⁵⁰

A keen interest in drawing is reflected in the work of a number of early Group members, such as the Cook brothers, Rita Angus and Leo Bensemann.

W.A. Sutton has stated that, "At Art School much of the training was in a romanticised version of Impressionism."⁵¹ Cecil Kelly, for example, taught still-life and landscape. In his teaching he followed the 'plein-air' tradition of the Impressionists.

Kelly and Archibald Nicoll shared an interest in light and atmospheric conditions and their works and teaching must be counted as influential factors. Both painters chose the subjects for their landscapes from local areas, and although their interests were primarily Impressionist and they treated their subjects tonally, these artists often applied colour in broad patches. Some Group members, such as Evelyn Page and Viola Macmillan Brown, continued to work in styles derived from Impressionism. Others developed a style in which the concentration was on capturing the structure and patterns of their motifs, transforming them into precisely defined images.

Possible sources of inspiration also include poster art; reproductions in the Studio Magazine in the early 'thirties of Grant Wood's regionalist works,⁵² and of British and

⁵⁰ N. Marsh, Blackbeech and Honeydew. An Autobiography, Auckland 1966 p 98.

⁵¹ 'Bill' William Alexander Sutton Retrospective 1917-1971, p 4-5.

⁵² E.g. C. Morley, "American Gothic: The Middle West as Depicted by Grant Wood, an American Painter", The Studio, Vol 104, 1932, p 34; "Canada's National Painters", Studio, Vol 103, 1932, p 311.

Canadian artists' paintings; the exhibitions of British Art toured by the Murray Fullers (in 1928, 1930, 1932 and 1935) and the Empire Art Loan Collection Society (1934), the Carnegie Corporation Sponsored "Exhibition of Contemporary Canadian Painting" (1938) and the three touring shows from the collection of Captain Humphrey Davies which included Japanese colour prints and Chinese jade porcelain and painting.⁵³

Rita Angus, for example, was interested in Chinese painting and Eastern philosophies. Leo Bensemann also acknowledges the influence of Japanese prints on his early black and white work. It is significant in this context, that the critic of the 1938 Group show was reminded of the mood of Japanese colour prints when he saw the work of Olivia Spencer Bower and these two artists.

The 1947 Retrospective show gave A.R.D. Fairburn a twenty-year overview of the work of the Group artists and he took the opportunity of comparing the Canterbury artists with their Auckland counterparts. He noticed certain 'distinguishing features' in New Zealand art. One of these he described as a certain "vulgarity" which he explained as

the form one finds in Canterbury - a sort of effeminacy, an insistence on over-careful rather than strong drawing; and a reluctance to use

⁵³ The show in 1935 also included pieces from Sir Joseph Kinsey's collection. Davies gave lectures at the C.S.A while the show was there. Ref. also Capt. Humphrey Davies, "Japanese Colour Prints". Art in New Zealand, Vol VIII, No 1 (September 1935) pp 21-26.

any colour combinations that are not 'sweet'.⁵⁴

Roland Hipkins, in his Studio article on New Zealand art, also discerned similarities among some of the Canterbury painters, in particular Rita Angus, Juliet Peter and Louise Henderson. The description of the painting of Rita Angus could apply in varying degrees to the others. He described her works as

clear cut in design and consciously rhythmic. The sparkling light, so characteristic of New Zealand, is intensified, not by atmospheric realism but by the use of sharp, linear emphasis and by simplified colour and tonal gradations within the masses.⁵⁵

It is worth comparing this statement with an earlier review of the Canterbury Society of Arts' exhibition by the critic 'Conrad' in 1936. He noticed that most of the landscapes exhibited showed a new quality

which seems to consist in a removal of the romantic mists which used to obscure mountains and the Canterbury countryside generally. The light is now clear and hard, the colours are in flat planes and the effect is one of seeing the country through a gem-like atmosphere.⁵⁶

This indicates that there was a general tendency toward a broader treatment of landscape, and that it was not a unique phenomenon noted only about works shown in Group exhibitions. However, there is likely to have been a greater concentration of artists exhibiting these quali-

⁵⁴ A.R.D. Fairburn, "Art in Canterbury. Some Notes on the Group Show", Landfall, Vol II, No 1 (March 1948) pp 47-48.

⁵⁵ Roland Hipkins, "Contemporary Art in New Zealand", Studio International, Vol CXXXV, No 661 (April 1948), p 111.

⁵⁶ Conrad, "Society of Arts Exhibition. Impressions of Works on View", Part 1, Christchurch Press, March 20, 1936, p 18.

ties in their works in The Group shows, and the appreciation of these qualities would have been facilitated by the method of display employed by The Group in its exhibitions. This does not mean that there was necessarily ever any conscious unity of approach amongst the members. Not all the Canterbury members' work had stylistic affinities as the comparison of Evelyn Page's portraiture with Rita Angus's and Leo Bensemann's work, by the 1938 Press critic indicated. Nevertheless their work had more in common than with a great many of the C.S.A exhibitors.

The work of artists from other centres added even more variety to the exhibitions. The reviewers often had greater difficulty in assessing their work, probably because they had had less opportunity for observing the development of these artists. A typical response by critics when faced with the work of unfamiliar artists would be to describe the exhibits in terms such as "interesting experimentation".⁵⁷ As a consequence, The Group exhibitors whose works the critics found most provocative or controversial were from other centres. They included Edith Collier, R.N. Field, Madeline Vyner, C. Perkins, M.T. Woollaston, and Colin McCahon.

The critics' unfamiliarity with these artists' works and intentions would also have helped to draw attention to similarities in the Canterbury painters' work.

⁵⁷ Professor Shelley on Edith Collier's work in the 1929 exhibition.

Collier, who only exhibited with The Group in 1929 and 1931, was possibly the least controversial of the aforementioned artists. Nevertheless, it is almost certain that the local critics would have been unfamiliar with the principles underlying her most advanced works executed during her stay abroad (1912-1921), some of which she showed with The Group.⁵⁸ There is no doubt that it was Collier's work which most deserved the notice of Professor Shelley when, at the opening of The Group show in 1929, he remarked

that it was a valuable thing to have young people expressing something fresh in art, whose pictures would not possibly be hung at the more conventional annual exhibition, because their works were definitely experimental.⁵⁹

However, it was R.N. Field who, when he joined The Group in 1931, attracted more attention from the critics, and was probably most responsible for establishing The Group's reputation for exhibiting the unconventional and 'experimental'. As mentioned earlier, Dr Lester had described The Group as representing a 'spirit of revolt and experiment'. An artist, Lester stated, is finished as a creative worker if he loses the spirit of revolt "against the conventions he feels are fettering his art". As for experiment, Lester said, "For an artist to paint simply what he sees, or what is demanded if he is to indulge the

⁵⁸ For a discussion of the critical response to her work, refer: Edith Collier in Retrospect, Sarjaent Gallery, Wanganui, 1980, pp 22-24.

⁵⁹ "Exhibition of Paintings. The 1929 Group", Christchurch Press, September 10, 1929, p 2.

public is to condemn himself."⁶⁰ Every review of the 1931 show noted that Field's work in particular was expressive of 'modern attitudes', and as the review in Art in New Zealand stated, Field was "seeking an escape from the trammels of traditional realism."⁶¹ It must be noted that in all the reviews of the early shows in which Field's work appeared, the terms 'style' and 'technique' became interchangeable. An artist who showed anything out of the ordinary was as often as not considered by critics to be 'modern' and therefore 'experimental'. In Field's case such a description was reasonably accurate. He would exhibit paintings in a variety of techniques or styles ranging from a broad variation of Impressionism to a modified 22pointillism or cubism.

In his 1931 review, Shelley noted

That he (*Field*) has the real spirit of art stirring within him is obvious from the sound qualities of *Tomahawk Lagoon* (59) and the expressive colour of *Woodhaugh* (67) but one is not sure that the labour pains in *The Adoration* (61) which adopts the pointillist method of Seurat and in the Cubist *Story of Mankind* (66) are not out of proportion to the progeny they bring forth.⁶²

In addition, Field tried painting on a variety of surfaces, 10for instance *Christ at the Well*, in which the grain of the wood panel upon which it is painted is left exposed in places to form part of the composition.⁶³

⁶⁰ "Painting and Sculpture. Work of the 1931 Group. Exhibition at Art Gallery", Christchurch Press, September 10, 1931, p 13.

⁶¹ "The 1931 Group Exhibition", Art in New Zealand, Vol IV, No 14, (December 1931) p 122.

⁶² Professor J. Shelley, "Exhibition at Art Gallery. The 1931 Group. Work of Importance", Christchurch Times, September 14, 1931, p 2.

⁶³ R.N. Field, *Christ at the Well of Samaria*, oil on woodpanel. Coll. National Art Gallery. Exhibited 1931 Group.

If Field was responsible for establishing The Group's reputation as an affiliation of *avant-garde* artists, it was confirmed the following year when the exhibition included works by Christopher Perkins and Madeline Vyner in addition to R.N. Field. Eventually, with continued exposure, Field's work no longer startled, and the 'limelight' was taken up by Woollaston, who first exhibited in 1936, and then by McCahon whose association with The Group began in 1940.

Something of the perceived character of The Group may be gained from two commentaries on the Group's 1947 Retrospective exhibition. This exhibition included both new works by the then present members and work by past members shown in the early days of The Group's existence. The Listener's account of the show contained the following statement:

Naturally the styles ranged from the academic to the hard to understand, but most who attended the exhibition came away feeling that the Group had done something for art in Christchurch.⁶⁴

The other review, by Fairburn, is incidentally the only review in, or of, the twenty-year period which offers other than praise for the majority of works exhibited. Fairburn began his review by stating that

Most art shows in New Zealand are unexciting. There is nearly always a predominance of the sort of dull trash that is thought of by the public (and by most artists) as being 'traditional.'⁶⁵

⁶⁴ "Exhibition by 'The Group'", N.Z. Listener, Vol XVII, No 439, (November 21, 1947) p.9.

⁶⁵ A.R.D. Fairburn, Landfall, Vol II, No 1 (March 1948), p 47.

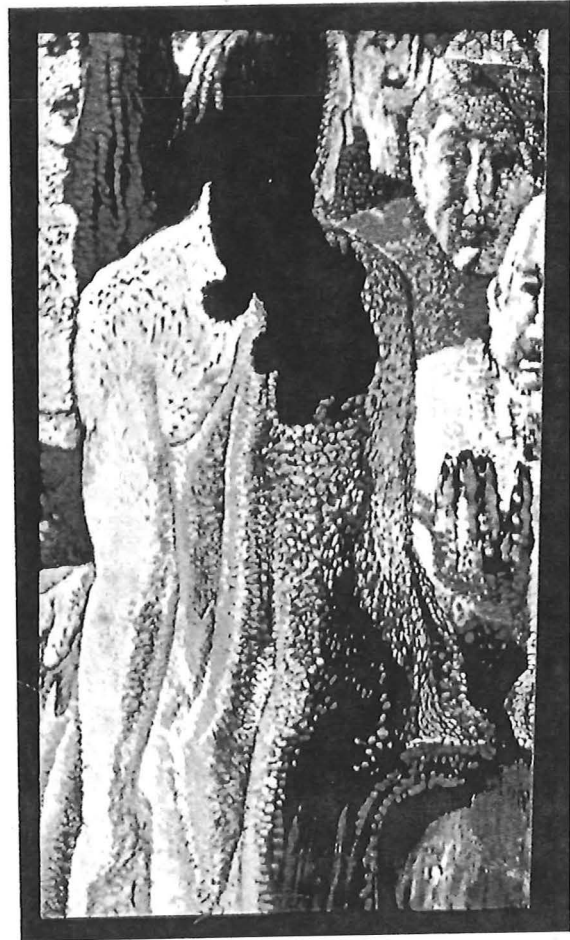
But, like other critics before him, Fairburn indicated that The Group's exhibitions were worthwhile, for

there was a higher proportion of work that was in one way or another 'interesting' than one normally dares to hope for. And there was more variety of style and subject matter than is to be found in, for instance, the usual Auckland show.⁶⁶

It was for these kinds of reasons that The Group shows were guaranteed a warm reception by critics in their earlier years.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

10. R.N.Field, *Christ at the Well of Samaria*.
oil on wood panel,
91.4 x 56.4 cm
(National Art Gallery)



11. James Cook, *Lunch-hour Politicians*. (Study for a Mural Panel). c.1931, 185 x 129 cm.

CHAPTER III

THE EXHIBITIONS 1927-1947

The Group shows in the early years attracted much critical attention and praise: For the variety of work contained in its exhibitions, for the employment of display methods which facilitated the appreciation of each artist's work, and the quality of the exhibits which were selected, not by a committee, but by the individual artist.

An examination of the distinctive features, and other differences between its shows and the annual exhibitions of the Art Societies serves to indicate the nature of the contribution made by this affiliation of artists to the development of modernism in New Zealand.

The contemporary assessment of this contribution was that the Group artists represented a spirit of experiment and revolt. This belief implies that the Group not only showed work which differed in style, technique and subject matter, but that its members were expanding the boundaries of art expression. Examples of artist's exhibits and specific shows will later be examined in the light of such claims. First, a general survey will be made of the way artists interpreted the nature of the opportunity offered by membership in the Group, when alternatives for exhibiting were limited and often restrictive.

One of the most striking differences lies in the number of works shown by members of the Group in its exhibitions compared with the number of works shown by these same artists at the annual exhibitions of the C.S.A.. Generally, where

artists were associated with both organisations, they showed more works at Group exhibitions, particularly in the earliest years. Also notable was the number of works contributed to later exhibitions by new members, especially artists whose work had little chance of acceptance for display by an Art Society.

The Group appears to have had no stated policy on the number of exhibits to which the individual artist might be restricted, at least in its first twenty years of existence.¹ whereas the number of works an artist exhibited in the Society's exhibitions was, of course, subject to the decision of the selection committee.

The result of the combination of the above factors is quite apparent in the 1929, 1931 and 1932 Group exhibitions. In the 1929 show for example, seven of the nine participants exhibited more than ten works each. As a basis for comparison, Viola MacMillan Brown had four works exhibited at the C.S.A. and fourteen at the Group show; similar figures are true for the other participants.

It is more difficult to make comparisons between the 1931 Group and C.S.A. exhibitions as no Group Show Catalogue for 1931 has been located, although partial reconstruction of it is possible from reviews of that exhibition. It comprised at least one hundred and fifty-one works², making it

¹A letter to potential guest exhibitors in 1961 states; "Receiving date before or on the 30th Sept. in Durham St Art Gallery. You may exhibit six paintings". Group show letters in the possession of Leo Bensemann.

²This figure from Professor J. Shelley "Exhibition at Art Gallery...." Christchurch Times, Sept. 14, 1931, p.2. Shelley was in the habit of supplying the catalogue number when he discussed specific works.

the largest exhibition in the twenty year period under review, with the exception of the 1947 Retrospective. It is assumed that most of those who participated would have contributed about as many works as to the previous exhibition. Some artists showed more works, for example, R.N. Field and F.A. Shurrock, who exhibited at least fifteen and nineteen works respectively.

These two artists exhibited the largest number of works at the 1932 Group Show, with Field showing eighteen works and Shurrock twenty-seven items which included works in a variety of media. The most that Shurrock exhibited anywhere else that year was four works at the Otago Art Society's annual exhibition.

An examination of a later Group exhibition, the 1940 Show, reveals that the difference in the number of works exhibited at the Group and Art Society exhibitions was less marked. Members showed between five and seven works each in both the Group and Society exhibitions*. One exception however, was Colin McCahon, the guest exhibitor. He took advantage of the opportunity by showing a selection of thirteen works.

McCahon was at this time a member of the Otago Art Society, but in the 1940 annual exhibition only one of his works was included. In fact this painting had originally been refused; it was reluctantly readmitted when other young

* This includes the Canterbury Society of Arts, the Otago Art Society, the Auckland Society of Arts, and the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts.

Society members protested by removing their work from the exhibition.³

McCahon, although possibly a more extreme case, was facing a similar situation to some of the earlier Group members such as Edith Collier, Madeline Vyner, W.H. Allen and R.N. Field who had also experienced difficulty in having their work accepted. W.H. Allen has recalled how both his and Field's work was regarded with great suspicion by the Otago Art Society, who believed the pair were bent on spreading 'modern' ideas on art.⁴ Nevertheless, both artists persisted with the Art Society exhibitions until their work eventually won acceptance.

By the nineteen-forties, however, the Group included a few members who did not wish to persist with, or maintain any contact with Art Societies. McCahon ceased to send work to the Otago Art Society after 1943, and like M.T. Woollaston and Leo Bensemann, regarded exhibiting with Art Societies as compromising them as artists. Woollaston had made his attitude to Art Societies clear in a piece he wrote for the Independent paper Tomorrow in 1936. He said;

We are at war with Art Societies and gallery syndicates. We have got, and will get, nothing from them unless we submit to be patronised, selected and instructed by them, and tacitly

³ The work was *Sandy Mount, Otago Peninsula*, also shown in the 1940 Group Show. Ref. Doris Lusk Retrospective. Dowse Art Gallery, Lower Hutt, (June 1973), no pagination; and G.H. Brown *New Zealand Painting 1940-1960. Conformity and Dissension*. Wgtn. 1981, p.21.

⁴ Letter from W.H. Allen to T. Mackle, 14 April 1983, and supported by other letters. National Art Gallery Artists Files.

acknowledge the greater claim of the socially more important. Were we to do all these things we would get one or two pictures hung but not sold, and a press notice- "promising young artist, should improve with experience."⁵

Woollaston was not alone in feeling that the Art Societies inhibited freedom of expression and experimentation with their selection procedures. Professor Shelley, in a review of the C.S.A's 1934 exhibition, was equally cynical when he wrote;

One can scarcely avoid the impression that many of the pictures hung are admitted merely because there is a chance of a sale. The educative value of the exhibitions is sadly reduced by the low standard of some of the work shown.⁶

The Group on the other hand, provided an opportunity for artists to share costs and exhibiting space without pressure to conform to a selection committee's conception of what constituted 'acceptable art'. McCahon wrote in his account "Beginning";

I must admit to awful bitterness and to a hatred of 'them'; this still exists. But my beginnings were fortunate indeed, surrounded by no dealers, few exhibitions, very few where I was at all welcome, no pressure to 'Be with it' or to 'Go Go'.⁷

Because of the method of display employed, a Group show could be viewed as a collection of one-man-exhibitions. There was no pressure to participate every year, and since the Group had no policy of 'platform', artists were free to pursue their own directions. This is, no doubt, why Bensemann,

⁵ M.T. Woollaston, "Life Art" and the Bourgeois Manifesto" Tomorrow, Vol.II No.21 (April 29, 1936) p.22.

⁶ Prof. J. Shelley, "Canterbury Society of Arts Annual Exhibition" Art in New Zealand, Vol. VI, No.4 (June 1934) p.177.

⁷ Colin McCahon, "Beginnings" Landfall, Vol. XX, No.4, (Dec. 1966) p.364.

Woollaston and McCahon continued to exhibit with the Group for most of its existence. In Bensemann's case the Group shows became the main outlet for his work.

Group members who did not send works to society exhibitions were the exception, however, because if nothing else, these exhibitions provided a relatively inexpensive means of gaining exposure. Moreover, by the nineteen-forties some Group members were quite well established and had attained more influential positions in Art Society affairs. For example, Olivia Spencer Bower was a member of the Council of the C.S.A. from 1940, and R.N. Field became the President of the Otago Art Society in 1945. By then, these and other artists such as Rata Lovell-Smith and Louise Henderson, exhibited the same number of works at the Group show as elsewhere. For them the Group show may have become but one of a series of annual exhibiting venues.

Another striking difference between the Group and art societies was the range of work which was shown in the former's exhibitions. For as well as providing the opportunity for its members to exhibit a larger number of works, the Group also allowed an artist to present a fuller statement of his or her concerns in a way which the art societies' annual exhibitions never allowed, - namely, the presentation of ideas worked through in a variety of media.

An important part of the character of the Group's shows was the diversity of work contained in them and this aspect was repeatedly commented upon by guest speakers and critics alike. When he opened the 1940 show, Leicester Webb remarked;

The Group, for me, has always been one of the pleasing mysteries of Christchurch, because of its vitality....It did not get its vitality from the fact that it represented any particular school, because as a glance around the exhibition would show, its work was of an amazing variety.⁸

The "variety" to which the speaker referred included not only different stylistic approaches, but also the range of media employed. The Christchurch Times critic of the 1932 show had observed;

The great variety of the exhibition bespeaks the independence behind it. There is not only a wide variety of outlook, but there is variety in medium, variety in kind, and, of course, variety in size.⁹

The connection made in this review between variety and independence is better understood when we realise the prominence of painting in the late nineteen-twenties and early 'thirties.

In 1929 W.H. Allen concluded his article "Impressions of New Zealand Art" by stating that;

These remarks are chiefly concerned with painting because the various Art Societies in New Zealand apparently consider painting to be by far the most important form of art.¹⁰

Later reviews by d'Auvergne Boxall and 'Criticus' of the 1931 and 1932 annual exhibitions of the C.S.A. respectively, also contain criticism of the absence of drawings, prints and sculpture. As well as this, Boxall draws attention to plans

⁸ "Celebration of Centennial. Artists small part regretted. Opening of the 1940 Groups Exhibition" Christchurch Press, Sept.23, 1940, p.8.

⁹ "A Good Display. Work of the 1932 Group. This Years Exhibition." Christchurch Times, Sept. 6, 1932, p.3.

¹⁰ W.H. Allen, "Impressions of New Zealand Art". Art in New Zealand, Vol.1 No.4, (June 1929), p.216.

for the separate exhibiting of drawing and sculpture, and voices his concern about the implications;

...to give the public every opportunity of viewing good sculpture in the company of good pictures seems to me to be part of the Art Society's privilege. I have since learned that these two important sections (drawing and sculpture) are not overlooked, but find a place in the Craft Show held later in the year. One hopes that in so placing them the public does not receive the impression that a lesser importance is attached to drawing than to painting.¹¹

Back in 1906-7 after the New Zealand International Exhibition, the Society had in fact decided to include an arts and crafts section in the annual exhibition. The number of such exhibits, however, increased to such an extent that by the nineteen-twenties separate exhibitions were held to cater for these works.¹² One such exhibition held in October 1929 is mentioned in Art in New Zealand. It included "graphic and plastic crafts, drawings and studies".¹³

Some sculptural work was actually included in the annual exhibitions, but as the catalogues reveal, very little was ever exhibited.¹³ For instance, R.N. Field exhibited three sculptures in the 1928 C.S.A. annual exhibition, and the next piece to appear in an annual exhibition was F.A. Shurrock's *Portrait of R.E. McDougall* in 1932. It would seem that sculptural

¹¹ d'A. Boxall, "Observations on the Canterbury Society of Arts Exhibition" Art in New Zealand, Vol.III, No.12 (June 1931)p.256: ref. also 'Criticus' "Canterbury Society of Arts Exhibition" Art in New Zealand, Vol.IV, No.16 (June 1932)p.259.

¹² ref. Canterbury Society of Arts 1880-1980 Robert McDougall Art Gallery Christchurch, 1980, p.12ff.

¹³ "Art Notes, Christchurch" Art in New Zealand, Vol.II, No.6 (Dec.1929)p.142

¹⁴ Not much sculptural work could have been available in any case, as for example, there were no facilities in New Zealand for large scale bronze casting.

work was held in low esteem by the Society judging from the description by 'Criticus' of the presentation of Shurrock's work in 1932:

The skylights at the exhibition were draped so that light fell on the walls, leaving the centre of the room comparatively dark and here was placed the solitary plastic work. Nevertheless, striking two wax matches, I was able to discover that it was a coloured plaster bust, a portrait study of R.E. McDougall Esq. by Francis Shurrock.¹⁵

Shurrock ruefully accepted that "at the Art Society you had to submit paintings or you would never be recognised as an artist."¹⁶

Such attitudes, effectively perpetuated by the content and presentation of the C.S.A.'s exhibitions, may have been a strong motivation for the formation of the Group. The Group had no policy that either promoted or emphasised the exhibiting of any one kind of work or medium. Soon after its first major public appearance in 1929, the range of work presented in the shows expanded. This resulted from the original decision of the Group members to let the artists themselves choose what to exhibit. This decision helped to encourage experimentation, as one member observed in 1945;

Not only are there paintings and sculpture but drawings, lino-cuts and etchings; in fact, members feel that in such exhibitions there is a definite place for experimental work in whatever medium.¹⁷

¹⁵ 'Criticus', "Canterbury Society of Arts Exhibition", Art in New Zealand, Vol.IV, No.16 (June 1932)p.26o.

¹⁶ Cited by Michael Dunn, "The Life and Art of Francis Shurrock" Bulletin of New Zealand Art History, Vol.VII, 1979 p.23.

¹⁷ "The 1945 Group" The Arts in New Zealand, Vol.XVII, No.6 (Jan. Feb.1946) p.22.

Before specific shows and works are examined in terms of this statement, and to illustrate the range of works presented, a general survey of the pattern of the Group's shows over the twenty year period is required.

The survey begins with the first exhibition held by the Group in the Durham Street Art Gallery in 1929, as there is no record of the content of the 1927 and 1928 shows held in the studio. It consisted mainly of paintings, nevertheless a variety of stylistic approaches and subject matter was evident. The shows in 1931 and 1932 contained a far greater range of work including drawings, sculpture, prints and metalwork. A number of the painting and sculptural exhibits in particular, were of an experimental or 'modern' nature. The two NZSoA exhibitions of 1933 and 1934 were comparable with the latter two shows in this respect.

In the second half of the 'thirties paintings vastly outnumbered exhibits in other media, and the subject matter was predominantly landscape, with a revival of interest in portraiture appearing towards the end of the decade.

From about 1940 onwards, the shows were again comprised of a diversity of work. In contrast to the early 'thirties however, this arose from the inclusion of work by artists who worked in disciplines other than painting, rather than individuals exhibiting work in different media.

AN EXAMINATION OF SELECTED WORKS FROM THE 1931 AND 1932 SHOWS

Shelley noted in his review of the 1931 show that the Group;

has been strengthened enormously since its last public appearance by the addition of artists of high standing such as Mssrs Shurrock, Field, Boxall and Cook...it is now an event of greater artistic importance than any that has happened in Christchurch for years.¹⁸

Of those mentioned, Shurrock and Field showed the greatest number of works in this and the following exhibition, and both attracted considerable attention in reviews because of the variety and number of works each contributed. Their exhibits demonstrate in what specific ways the content of the Group shows differed from the annual exhibitions of the C.S.A., and how the opportunity its shows offered was utilised.

Shelley introduced his discussion of Shurrock's work in 1931 by stating;

Perhaps the most interesting thing in the show for Christchurch people is the "breaking out" of Mr Shurrock....In sculpture, in oil, watercolour, pencil and even wood engraving, he evidences that sound grasp of materials which his thorough training in England gave him. His sculpture shows a gentle sensitivity and quiet understanding of human nature, less obtrusive but no less vital than the intriguing work of Mr Field.¹⁹

Shelley's comment on the "breaking out" of Shurrock is hardly surprising when it is considered that his exhibits at the C.S.A. were mainly paintings, supplemented by the occasional sculptural piece.

At the 1929 show opening, Shelley had expressed

¹⁸ Prof. J. Shelley, "Exhibition at the Art Gallery. The 1931 Group. Work of Importance", Christchurch Times, Sept. 14, 1931, p.2.

¹⁹ Ibid.

his belief that progress in art was, and could be, accomplished by the vigour of break-away groups of artists, and he hoped that through the Christchurch Group "much talent would come to life."²⁰ The years in which Shurrock was involved with the Group (1931-1932) and the NZSoA (1933-1934) were his most artistically vital and productive.

Shurrock did not take up painting seriously until he came to New Zealand. He had trained in architectural design and sculpture at the Royal College of Art in London,²¹ but upon his arrival in New Zealand under the La Trobe Scheme in 1924, he was faced with a heavy teaching commitment,²² inadequate facilities for large scale sculptural work at the Canterbury College School of Art, and a lack of encouragement from the art establishment.

In the less restricted atmosphere and more sympathetic setting of the Group show, however, Shurrock exhibited in 1931 a number of sculptural pieces, which included a carefully
 13 detailed portrait bust of R.N. Field, and two carved works titled *Architectural Feature* and *Garden Ornament*.²³ These represent a departure for the artist as he preferred to model rather than carve. Possibly the choice of material (Oamaru stone), the repeated pattern of simplified shapes and the generally broad treatment of the works were inspired by Field's approach

²⁰"Private View at Gallery", Christchurch Times, Sept.10, 1929, p.3.

²¹ref. Michael Dunn, p.21, and "Francis Shurrock Interviewed by Jocelyn Johnstone", Christchurch Star, Feb.7, 1976, p.5.

²²He taught classes in graphic art in addition to sculpture.

²³These works are illustrated in Art New Zealand, Vol.IV, No.15, (March 1932), pp.205-7.

12. F.A. Shurrock,
Christopher Perkins
1932, bronze,
44.5 cm high,
(Dunedin Public Art
Gallery)



13. F.A. Shurrock,
R.N. Field, c.1931
stone.



14. R.N. Field, *Head*,
in stone, c.1931
Oamaru stone.



to sculpture. The titles of the two works are, however, indicative of the different artistic inclinations of Shurrock and Field. Shurrock was far more academic in approach than Field; simplification or stylization could be accepted more readily if a piece was intended as a decoration or ornament.

In the same show, Field exhibited a carved head of Shurrock²⁴ in which the artist's features were treated as a series of planes; as well as works such as *Head in Stone*, in which it was apparent to critics that he was "an exponent of simplification."²⁵

Field was as much an experimentalist in his sculptural work as he was in his paintings, investigating materials, techniques and styles. His *Portrait Head of Shurrock* is almost cubist in its angular treatment. The *Head in Stone* was the result of Field's attempts at 'direct' carving in Oamaru stone. In this work he has dispensed with detail in favour of broad curving masses. The facial features are reduced to simplified shapes, unified by an over-all rough texture which draws attention to the nature of the material. Field's sculptural work was quite unique in New Zealand at this time, particularly the degree of abstraction he introduced as he sought to explore the essential sculptural properties of form and mass.

Another Group exhibitor who had a stimulating effect on Shurrock's work, was Perkins. After coming into contact with

²⁴ Illustrated in Michael Dunn, "Robert Field Sculpture 1925-32" Bulletin of New Zealand Art History, Vol.1, 1972, p.11.

²⁵ Chiaroscuro, "Impressive Exhibition at Art Gallery. Sculpture and Painting by 1931 Group." Christchurch Sun, Sept. 10, 1931, p.7.

him, Shurrock exhibited in 1932, a piece which he regarded as
 12 one of his best works, his *Portrait of Christopher Perkins*.²⁶

The surface of the bronze cast retains the texture of the modeller's marks which give the sculpture a feeling of greater spontaneity and life than is apparent in his other work. The dramatic turn of the sitter's head also contributes to the liveliness of the piece.

Claims made at the time that the Group exhibition "is probably a good deal more representative of what our artists are really doing"²⁷ could well apply even to a more traditional artists such as Shurrock, because for the first time the public could gain an appreciation of the range of his abilities and concerns. For instance, in the 1932 show, in addition to sculpture he also exhibited paintings, wood and lino-cuts, programme covers, bookplates and four pieces titled *leaf from my drawing pad*²⁸—most of which would not have been included in an annual exhibition of the C.S.A.

He was not the only 1932 Group member to show work in other media²⁹; in addition to paintings, James Cook, Rita Angus, Perkins and Field showed sets of drawings; V. MacMillan Brown and Alfred Cook prints; James Cook plans for murals and J.A. Johnstone silverwork.

²⁶ Michael Dunn, "Francis Shurrock", p.26. Shurrock must have executed this work in 1932, not 1933 as the article states. Francis Shurrock, *Christopher Perkins*, bronze. coll. Dunedin Public Art Gallery; 1932 Group, Cat. no.135.

²⁷ "A Good Display..." Christchurch Times, Sept. 6, 1932, p.3.

²⁸ 1932 Group, Cat. nos.27-34 and 106-118a.

²⁹ At least one third of the total number of exhibits were works other than paintings.

The two NZSoA exhibitions, likewise, contained a great variety of work. Shurrock reviewed the 1933 exhibition, and in it enumerated the different types of exhibits and suggested yet other forms which could be included in future exhibitions. He also criticised the distinction drawn elsewhere between 'crafts' and the 'fine arts'; a division which was so apparent in the annual exhibitions of the C.S.A.;

On a table in the long gallery are some examples of weaving. This exhibit may be looked upon as suspect by those who claim "fine" art. Surely it is either art, or no, "fine" implying all sorts of impossible gradations....Craft is not necessarily art, but art- good art is only effective by good craft.³⁰

These comments, the number and variety of his exhibits in the early Group shows (and at the NZSoA), and the public lectures he gave on behalf of the NZSoA (Such as "Art and Everyday-Industry and the Craftsman) indicate that Shurrock fully appreciated the opportunity given to artists by the Group and NZSoA exhibitions in terms of freedom of expression; also the chance these exhibitions gave to rectify contemporary attitudes about what was considered worthy of the title of 'fine art'.

In spite of the example of Shurrock and other early members, the shows in the second half of the 'thirties contained few works in media other than painting.³¹

³⁰ F.A. Shurrock, "Art Exhibition. Society of Artists. The Drawings" (III). Christchurch Times, Nov.3, 1933, p.7. Ref. also Ann Elias Rata Lovell-Smith, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Auckland University, 1979, pp.19-22 passim. Shurrock was sympathetic to the views of Eric Gill.

³¹ Sculpture was still a feature, principally exhibited by R.N. Field and C. Aitken

As the sculptural work shown in the Group exhibitions pointed in new directions, so too did the paintings. The content of the 1931 and 1932 shows suggested to critics, that the Group comprised artists willing to experiment and break away from accepted conventions.

Of the members who contributed paintings in 1931 and 1932, it was Field in particular, who caught the attention of the critics as being a "busy experimentalist".³² It seemed to them, that the "modernist attitude" was most predominant in his work, "both from the use of colour, the nature of his composition, and the idea behind his pictures..."³³ For example, in the earlier of the two shows, his exhibits included a number of paintings with religious themes; *A Study for an Altar-piece*, *The Adoration*, *The Story of Mankind* and *Christ at the Well*. Shelley's review of this show indicates that Field had employed several styles in these works, including pointillism and cubism.³⁴ These paintings would have struck an unusual note with contemporary art audiences because this kind of subject matter was rarely seen in exhibitions, and his stylistic approach was very advanced by New Zealand standards.

Just as Field explored the sculptural concerns of form, mass and texture in his three-dimensional work, so too in his

³² Chiaroscuro, "Exhibition of 1932 Group. Much Experimental Work In Paintings and Sketches" Christchurch Sun, Sept. 7, 1932, p.7.

³³ "Paintings and Sculpture. Work of the 1931 Group. Exhibition at Art Gallery", Christchurch Press, Sept. 10, 1931, p.13. Also in "The 1931 Group", Art in New Zealand, Vol.IV, No.14, (Dec. 1931)p.122.

³⁴ Ref. Chapter 2, p.68.

paintings he experimented with colour and techniques of paint application on different surfaces;- canvas, paper, card, glass 10 and wood. For example, Field painted *Christ at the Well* in a technique derived from pointillism. The spots of colour impart a vibrancy to the surface, and unpainted areas of the dark wood panel heighten this effect. The grain of the wood forms Christ's hair, as well as other parts of the composition.

Amongst Field's exhibits in 1932 were several portraits which were again painted in a modified pointillist technique,- 22 his *Portrait of Miss Kelsey* ³⁴ is one example. Unlike *Christ at the Well* where the focal plane of the picture was kept shallow, here Field actually used colour properties to create an illusion of depth; the clothing of the woman is predominantly red, set against a background of its complementary colour, green. Juxtaposed areas of light and dark green dots and dashes create an impression of spatial recession. The other interesting aspect of this painting is the degree of ease and informality the artist has managed to introduce into this portrait.

Field's work had no immediate followers. It was Field's willingness to experiment in search of new and appropriate means of expression, more than the style of the works which had the most influence. Woollaston told an interviewer from Art in New Zealand;

When I first came into contact with Mr Field's work I felt immediately a release and freedom which enabled me to go on further in my own

³⁴ *Miss (Lavina) Kelsey*, 1931, oil on canvas, coll. Hocken Library, Dunedin. Exhibited 1932 Group, Cat. no.25, New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts in 1936, and National Centennial Exhibition of New Zealand, 1940.

personal medium of expression.³⁵

Another artist whose exhibits in the 1932 show left an impression on Woollaston, was Perkins.³⁶ The works he exhibited comprised four paintings, *Burnt Pines*, *Woman on the Shore*,³⁷ *Pines at Taupo*, *(Silverstream) Brickworks* and three drawings. The clarity of his images and his emphasis on drawing and design had an affinity with the direction some Canterbury-based painters, such as Rata Lovell-Smith, Rita Angus, Alfred and James Cook, Louise Henderson, Ngaio Marsh and Olivia Spencer Bower were taking in their work.

The two works which captured the attention of the
6
7 critics were *Woman on the Shore* and *Brickworks*. The first was variously described as "a curious blend of modernism and of an old Italian School"³⁸ and "a poetic sermon in paint, a piece of symbolism"³⁹; the second was noted for its modelling, design, strong colour and impression of bright light. Professor Robertson, in his article on Perkins described how the idea for a work like *Brickworks* arose;

Gradually certain typical elements in New Zealand typography were beginning to define themselves in his mind, and his task as a creative artist was to bring these into harmony with the abstract designs

³⁵ "Mr Tosswill Woollaston. A Little Known New Zealand Artist Interviews Our Reporter", Art in New Zealand, Vol.X, No.1. (Sept. 1937)p.7.

³⁶ Ref. M.T. Woollaston, The Far Away Hills, Auckland City Art Gallery Assoc.s Inc., 1962, p.32.

³⁷ Also called *Meditation*. 1931, Oil on canvas, coll. Auckland City Art Gallery. Group 1932, Cat. no.64.

³⁸ Chiaroscuro. Christchurch Sun, Sept. 7, 1932, p.7.

³⁹ "1932 Group Exhibition" Art in New Zealand, Vol.V, No.18, (Dec.1932)p.98.

that were singing like a melody in his unconscious.⁴⁰

The background of the work is dominated by a pattern of rounded hill shapes, broken up by sharp-angled shadows. The commonplace subject of the brickworks is translated into geometric shapes, parallelograms, rectangles and triangles.

In this one work alone were consolidated many of the concerns which were emerging in the work of some of the younger Canterbury painters; concerns such as the depiction of motifs hitherto ignored as possible subject matter; the impression of strong even light created through the clear definition and demarcation of all the elements in the composition; and the reduction of unnecessary detail in favour of simpler shapes. Some of these features were already evident in the work of a few exhibitors in the 1932 show.

A number of works exhibited by Rita Angus and Alfred Cook were executed in Napier after the earthquake and depict
 8
 9 the ruins. In their pictures of Blythes Building⁴¹, both artists have concentrated on the formal possibilities of the shapes of the ruined building and the play of light and shade created by them. The following year, partially arising from the interests of her Napier work, and also, it would appear
 15 from exposure to Perkins's work, Angus exhibited *Gasworks*.⁴²
 In this painting, the subject has been reduced to stark,

⁴⁰ P.W.Robertson. "The Art of Christopher Perkins" Art in New Zealand, Vol. IV, No.13 (Sept. 1931)p.11.

⁴¹ R.Angus, *Blythes Building, Napier* 1932, watercolour, coll. on loan to Robert McDougall Art Gallery. Group 1932, Cat. no.71: Alfred Cook, *Ruins, Napier*, etching. Group 1932, Cat. no.91.

⁴² *Gasworks*, oil on canvas, exhibited C.S.A. 1933.

simple shapes and the treatment of them is reminiscent of the geometric forms of Perkins's brickworks motif.

The theme of the industrial scene and worker activities was a particularly pertinent one in the Depression years, when scarcity of jobs, and the plight of the workers was dominating the thoughts of so many people. But works with this kind of subject matter were never common. Shurrock observed that;

Art is surely not a withdrawal from life....
it would appear from the work of many of our
artist members that they flee from human contact;
at least in their working hours.^{4 3}

Nevertheless, a significant proportion of James Cook's exhibits in the 1932 show were of 'human' subject matter, of which the drawing *Au Cafe* is a typical example. One critic described how "His figure work expresses subtleties of characterization and movement and action. He deals with the actualities of life..."^{4 4} The works which dominated his selection were his mural plans; *Lunch-hour Politicians* a detailed depiction of factory workers; and another design in which the Nativiy is portrayed in a modern setting.^{4 5} In spite of their subject matter and his attention to detail, these works do not protest at the conditions of the Depression. The problems of recording expression, gesture and movement, and fitting figures into an overall design were his primary considerations, especially in a work like *Lunch-hour Politicians*. The same was true of other

^{4 3} "Francis Shurrock, "Canterbury Society of Arts Annual Exhibition" Art in New Zealand, Vol.V, No.20 (June 1933)p.205.

^{4 4} Chiaroscuro, Christchurch Sun, Sept. 7, 1932, p.7.

^{4 5} *Lunch-hour Politicians* catalogued as *Study for a Mural Decoration*, Group 1932, Cat. no.120; *Study For a Mural Panel* Group 1932, Cat. no.83; illus. Art in New Zealand, Vol.V, no.19 (March 1933)p156

artists who ventured into this kind of subject matter, for example, Alfred Cook's drawing *Watersiders* and Perkins's *Activity on The Wharf*, both exhibited in the first NZSoA exhibition, and Ngaio Marsh's *Relief Workers* (C.S.A. 1935 and Group 1947)^{4 6} The works of some artists reveal an interest akin to regionalism. In these, the attempts to depict characteristic New Zealand activities is an important feature. Examples are F.A. Shurrock's lino-cut *Sale Day* (NZSoA 1933) and Olivia Spencer Bower's *Shearing Time* (C.S.A. 1933) and *Timber Mill* (C.S.A. 1935)⁷.

The early 'thirties was a period of experimentation with techniques and stylistic approaches, and exploration of new subject matter. The two NZSoA exhibitions continued in the same spirit as the early Group shows. From the mid-thirties, however, artists began in earnest to select certain types of imagery and introduce qualities into their work which could be readily identified as typical of the New Zealand environment.

THE NZSoA

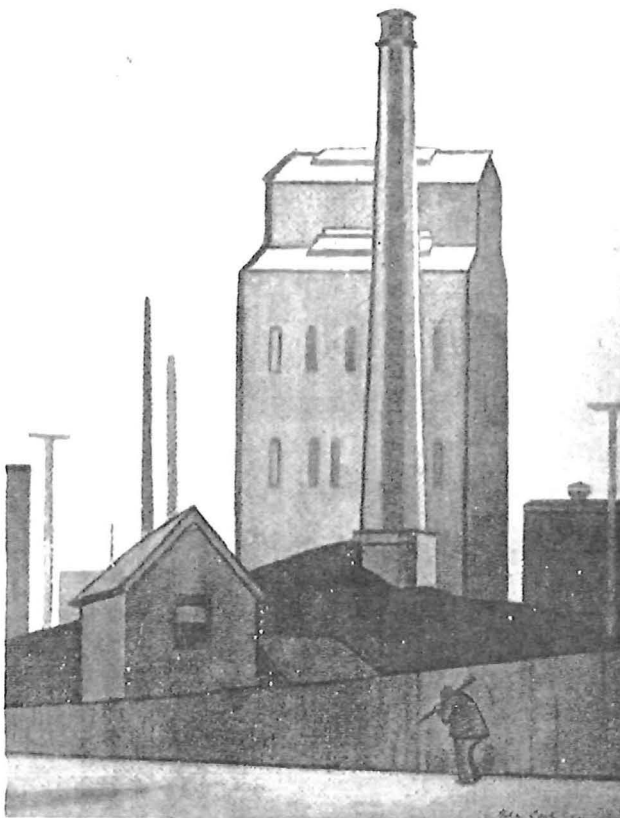
Like the Group, the NZSoA mounted lively exhibitions containing much work of an experimental nature.

Basil Honour's statement about the aims and intentions of the NZSoA suggests that this organisation, in which the Group members played an active role, likewise encouraged its members to show work which differed from "the endless

^{4 6}

^{4 6} *Relief Workers*, oil on canvas, Group 1947, Cat. no.180

^{4 7} *Sale Day*, lino-cut. Illus. Art in New Zealand, Vol.VI, no.2 (Dec.1933) p.94. The works by Olivia Spencer Bower are illustrated in the C.S.A Annual Exhibition Catalogues, 1933 and 1935 respectively.



15. Rita Angus, *Gasworks*, c.1933, oil on canvas



16. Ngaio Marsh, *Relief Workers*, c.1933, oil on canvas, 67.6 x 48 cm.

repetitions of ideas, techniques, motifs and effects"⁴⁸ seen year after year in the Art Society exhibitions. Frederick Page, in his review of the first exhibition, was sceptical about the possibility of achieving this ideal, but changed his mind after the second exhibition;

It is with genuine relief that one goes to their shows knowing that one will find canvases of fresh design and colour, of new impulse and direction.⁴⁹

The exhibitors included a number of young Dunedin artists who displayed 'modernist' works. Their efforts were largely dismissed by critics as "imitating fashions which have no real importance"⁵⁰. But of one of the guest exhibitors Page wrote;

It would have been interesting to have seen Flora Scales's pictures hung apart from the deliberately modern efforts....Powerful, even repellent, they had a genuine look which the others completely lacked.⁵¹

Her link with modernism was a real one, as she had attended the Hans Hofmann School in Munich. In 1934, without the work of Perkins, which was the highlight of the previous exhibition, it was the advanced nature of Scales's five paintings which presented the greatest challenge to critics and, no doubt, artists alike. The Christchurch Times critic

⁴⁸ W.Basil Honour, "N.Z. Society of Artists", Art in New Zealand, Vol.VI, no.1 (Sept. 1933)p.24.

⁴⁹ Frederick Page, "N.Z. Society of Artists Exhibition" Art in New Zealand, Vol.VI, no.2 (Dec.1934)p.80.

⁵⁰ Conrad, "N.Z. Society of Artists. Annual Exhibition" (II) Christchurch Press, Oct.30, 1934, p.17. Dunedin artists included R. Kennedy, D. Lusk, L. MacArthur, E. Alexander, T. Northey.

⁵¹ Frederick Page, p.80 and p.88.

defended her work, and informed readers that;

- 17 *Still-Life* for example....is not...intended in any way to be representational, although certain representational elements enter into the composition. Each picture has been carefully designed, and it must be realised that the same fundamental principles of colour, balance and composition have been adopted in the artist's work as in more representational pictures.⁵²

The artist most receptive to Scales's work was M.T. Woollaston. He established contact and the few lessons she gave him, and her lecture notes of Hans Hofmann's analysis of Cezanne had a great impact on Woollaston. When he first showed with the Group as a guest exhibitor in 1936 one writer observed;

Woollaston has been influenced by the modern German school and his use of colour is startling to the person seeing his work for the first time.⁵³

It was a period of experimentation for the artist, as he sought to apply the instruction he received, and examine afresh the principles of space construction employed by Cezanne in his paintings. The interpretation Woollaston made was, in his own words;

that his (Cezanne's) pictures are full of a new kind of space...created in terms of the two-dimensions of the picture-plane itself....How you related other planes to the picture-plane was the important thing....The lines you did it with, far

⁵²"Modern Art. Second Exhibition. N.Z. Society of Artists", Christchurch Times, Oct. 26, 1934. p.6. Ref. also Chiaroscuro, "Exhuberance is a Feature of the Paintings. Exhibition of N.Z. Society of Artists" (I) Christchurch Sun, Oct. 27, 1934, p.8.

⁵³"Art Notes", Art in New Zealand, Vol.IX, no.1 (Sept. 1936)p.111.

17. Flora
Scales,
Still-Life
Group.



18. M.T. Woollaston,
Figures From
Life, 1936, oil
and charcoal on
grey paperm
62.5 x 47.6 cm
(Auckland City
Art Gallery)



from merely imitating the outline of objects, had to be so disposed in contrast to flattening repeated verticals or horizontals as to create movement and tension.⁵⁴

18 *Figures From Life*⁵⁵ exhibited in the 1936 show was one of Woollaston's more successful studies in oil and charcoal, and demonstrates his attempts to incorporate these principles into his own work. Bold contour lines define the subjects. Colour applied in hatching strokes provide direction and set up tensions, but the overall effect is one where the two-dimensional nature of the surface is stressed, just as in Scales's *Still-Life*..

Subsequently his brushwork became more gestural and colour itself is used to define masses. Woollaston's work continued to contrast greatly with the Canterbury artists' paintings in the Group shows throughout the 'thirties and 'forties, even though, like for them, the New Zealand landscape was the prime source of his imagery and inspiration.

"THE MODERN CONCEPTION OF THE PURPOSE OF THE ARTIST."

The Press critic of the 1932 show believed that the paintings exhibited differed from the kind of work which abounded in the annual exhibitions of the C.S.A, "simply because they have their provenance from a different- possibly "the modern"- conception of the purpose of the artist."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ M.T. Woollaston, Sage Tea. An Autobiography, Auck. 1980, p.246.

⁵⁵ *Figures From Life*, 1936, oil and charcoal on paper. Coll. Auckland City Art Gallery. Group 1936, Cat. no.91

⁵⁶ "Exhibition of Paintings. "The 1932 Group". Modern Spirit Shown." Christchurch Press, Sept. 6, 1932, p.11.

The questions which arise from this statement are, what was regarded as the "modern purpose" of the artist in a New Zealand context, and what were its outward manifestations in the nineteen-thirties and 'forties, particularly with reference to the Group's exhibitions.?

One area already touched on, was the critics' recognition of a new approach to the depiction of landscape. It was essentially a rejection of the interests and technique of Impressionism; the attempt to capture the effects of light and atmospheric conditions on subjects. When a subject was expressed in tonal patches, it resulted in a loss of solidity and definition. There was a transference of interest to formal possibilities of motifs, - colour, shape and pattern. In a review in 1931, d'Auvergne Boxall described this change of interest as a swing from the 'romantic' to the 'modern classic viewpoint':

The romantic leans toward effect, naturalistic colour and the picturesque, whilst the classic stresses the formal relationship of parts and the structure of the picture apart from the subject....The manner in which forms are related to each other and their place in a scale of parts is considered, while colour is so controlled and harmonised as to become part of the single rhythmical expression...⁵⁷

In the 'thirties and 'forties the classic viewpoint outlined by Boxall was tied up with the development of regionalism, as artists sought to capture in paint the essence of places and record permanent values. The Group became a focus for

⁵⁷ d'Auvergne Boxall, "Observations on the Canterbury Society of Arts Exhibition". Art in New Zealand, Vol.III, no.12 (June 1931) p.256,p.261.

this activity especially in the late 'thirties and forties.

Another manifestation of 'modernism' received very little attention from the contemporary critics. Evident in the work of some New Zealand painters, even in the early 'thirties, was the recognition and treatment of the picture plane as a two-dimensional flat surface. Of the early Group and NZSoA exhibitors, the work of Field, Scales and Woollaston demonstrates an acknowledgement of the nature of the picture surface.

Such an approach runs counter to naturalism and the employment of traditional pictorial devices such as linear perspective, which is used to create an illusion of spatial recession. Some Group members retained a formally descriptive approach to their subject matter. Despite this, an impression of the flatness of the paintings surface could be retained by either presenting the elements of the composition head-on, so that they run parallel to the picture plane, or by choosing an unusual vantage point from which to depict the subject. For example, Scales instructed Woollaston to always paint from a position above his subject and to "tilt the planes up."⁵⁸

There was also a noticeable rejection of aerial perspective,- the fading of colours and loss of detail to indicate distance. Equal focus on all elements in the composition, and the effective use of colour contrasts for 'near'

⁵⁸ M.T. Woollaston, Sage Tea, p.247.

and 'far' objects, make the 'distance' correspond more closely to the picture plane. In the work of Rata Lovell-Smith, for example, the intensity of colour and the clarity of her images were important for "the effectiveness of her paintings as regional statements."⁵⁹

Two types of subject matter dominated the painting exhibits in the second half of the 'thirties and 'forties, - landscape and portraiture. As earlier indicated critics responded to, and were able to describe, the new tendencies in landscape, but they were generally slower to respond to the same stylistic tendencies in portraiture. The manifestations of 'modernism' outlined above were apparent in both fields, and examples of exhibits will be examined in this context.

PORTRAITURE

Woollaston alone exhibited portraits and figure studies in the 1936 show. In subsequent exhibitions, however, portraiture became a regular feature. Two artists who regularly presented work in this genre were Rita Angus and Leo Bensemann.

In the late 'thirties these two painters occupied adjacent studios. At this time they shared an interest in Oriental art and Italian Renaissance painting,⁶⁰ as well as a growing interest in portraiture, sometimes sitting for each other, or working from the same model.

⁵⁹ Ann Elias, "The landscape Paintings of Rata Lovell-Smith". Art New Zealand, No.26 1983, p.35.

⁶⁰ Ref. Avenal McKinnon, "Leo Bensemann" Art New Zealand, No.30 (Autumn 1984)p.33.

21 Bensemann's portrait *Allan Simmance*⁶¹ reflects his interest in Renaissance painting.⁶² The strictly profile study of the boy's head is juxtaposed against a sea-scape background. The flatness of this scene contrasts with the carefully modelled and strongly delineated features of the sitter; the impression of solidity thus achieved is reminiscent of bas-relief carving. This effect is heightened by the elimination of the texture of the brushstroke by the artist.

In Rita Angus's portraits, her sitters are similarly crisply and clearly defined. This quality is particularly noticeable in works where the background was left plain, as in 20 *Head of a (Maori) Boy* and *John Bush*.⁶³ There is no loss of form or structure through shadow or light effects. In fact, subtly shaded areas are actually used to define and give shape. She commented;

In portraiture, I note the special personality of the sitter, and often endeavour to express through the simplicity of line and colour, the content of the sitter's interesting complexity and diversity of moods.⁶⁴

Without any loss of clarity, she would often extend the representation of the sitter's personality and interests to an appropriate background, such as in *Betty Curnow*.⁶⁵ Elements of

⁶¹ *Allan Simmance*, oil on canvas. Group 1943, Cat. no.18

⁶² Compare for example portraits by Piero della Francesca, e.g. *Portrait of Federigo da Montefeltro*, after 1472.

⁶³ *Head of a (Maori) Boy*, 1938, oil on canvas, coll. Auckland City Art Gallery, Group 1940, Cat. no.81. *John Bush*, oil on canvas. Group 1945 Cat. no.22.

⁶⁴ "Rita Angus" Yearbook of the Arts in New Zealand, No.3, 1947, pp.67-68

⁶⁵ *Portrait of Betty Curnow*, 1942, oil on canvas, coll. Auckland City Art Gallery. Group 1943, listed as *Portrait*, Cat. no.11.



19. Evelyn Page, *Charles Brasch*, 1937, oil on canvas, 60.9 x 49.5 cm. (University of Otago)



20. Rita Angus, *John Bush*, 1945, oil on canvas



21. Leo Bensemann, *Allan Simmance*, oil on canvas



22. R.N. Field,
Miss (Lavina)
Kelsey, 1931, oil
on canvas,
51 x 40.7 cm,
(Hocken Library)

special meaning to that person would be incorporated into the painting, to create a kind of private symbolism which only those people closest to the sitter could read.

Both Angus's and Bensemann's portraits have a direct and unrelenting presence because of the clarity of their images. One of the few precedents in New Zealand painting for the juxtaposition of the sitter against a landscape backdrop, was H. Linley Richardson's *Mrs Thornley of Titahi Bay*,⁶⁶ c.1931-2, but by the late 'thirties this format had a definite link with regionalism.

LANDSCAPE

The other genre which dominated the Group's shows in the late 'thirties and 'forties was landscape. From the search for a national identity regionalism evolved. For a painter working in New Zealand this came to mean landscape imagery. Bensemann believes that the 1943 show was an important one for demonstrating the concentration of Group members on specific areas:

Something was beginning to happen in a New Zealand way, to a certain extent freed from the domination of the English and French art schools and expert opinion. With Doris Lusk painting Central Otago landscapes, Rita Cook exquisite Canterbury watercolours, Rata Lovell-Smith the Bealey, Louise Henderson Lyttleton, Evelyn Page Queenstown and Oamaru, Colin McCahon Pangatotora, R.N. Field North Otago, M.T. Woollaston Upper Moutere and Mahana and Phyllis Bethune Geraldine....The native scene was emerging with a force and impact of its own.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ "Mrs Thornley of Titahi Bay c.1931-2, oil, coll. Victoria University. This work was criticised when it was exhibited because the figure looked as if it had been pasted on. Ref. G.H.Brown New Zealand Painting 1940-1960, pp.43-4

⁶⁷ "The Group 1927-1977", Survey, no.16, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, (Nov. 1977) p.9.

The work shown in this and any other exhibition did not necessarily reflect a common stylistic approach. What is noticeable is the frequency of imagery which depicts the effect of man shaping the New Zealand environment. Man-made structures frequently occur as the dominant motif and focal point of the landscape. Sometimes too, the scene may be imbued with a sense of isolation and bleakness, a quality successfully captured in

26 Rata Lovell-Smith's *Gate on the Crest*.⁶⁸

The essence of the successful regionalist statement is summed up by Roland Hipkins when he described a work by Juliet Peter;

25 Her Geraldine Township is a compact aggregation of unpretentious wooden buildings of little architectural merit, but typical of hundreds of small rural communities throughout New Zealand. A generation ago painters would have infused elements of the picturesque to glamourize these utilitarian creations of local builders.⁶⁹

Her image, in this case a small town, ceases to be confined to a specific location. Peter's approach to her subject matter was basically straightforward and descriptive, as was Doris

23 Lusk in her Otago and Nelson paintings⁷⁰ that she showed with the Group in the 'forties. Their works succeed as regionalist statements through the clarity of all the elements in the composition, in addition to the type of motif which has been selected.

⁶⁸ *Gate on the Crest of the Scree*, c.1946, oil on canvas, Group 1946.

⁶⁹ Roland Hipkins, "Contemporary Art in New Zealand". *Studio International*, Vol.CXXXV, no.661 (April 1948) pp.111-12. Juliet Peter, *Geraldine*, 1943, Watercolour, coll. The Artist. Group 1947, Cat. no.103.

⁷⁰ For example *Tobacco Fields, Pangatōtonga*. 1943, oil on canvas. Coll. Auckland City Art Gallery. Group 1943, Cat. no.8

Louise Henderson was another member who concentrated on landscape in the 'thirties and 'forties. This artist favoured a more decorative and less detailed approach. In her water-colour *Stream, Broken River*,⁷¹ the bridge is reduced to simplified geometric forms to contrast with the swirling pattern of the river and rounded shapes of the cliffs. The contrast between man-made and natural features in the landscape was central to many regionalist works because of the interesting compositional possibilities this permitted.

The selected works also demonstrate an awareness of some of the 'modernist issues discussed earlier. In Henderson's work the illusion of three-dimensions is reduced by the decorative and stylised treatment of the scene.²³ Lusk chose a high vantage point and has tilted the view upwards which tends to flatten it out. The lines of the crops in the tobacco fields provide contrasting directional planes; they run obliquely to the edges of the canvas. This indicates that the artist was interested in creating an impression of space by means other than the traditional perspective system. The horizon line is virtually eliminated in Peter's *Geraldine*. The buildings of the country town are represented face-on and hence run parallel to the picture plane in a central band. The horizontal and vertical lines of the structures are echoed in the foreground and the fields at the top of the painting.

There was a danger of artists accepting the regionalist formula too readily, but in the work of the leading Group

⁷¹ *Stream, Broken River*. watercolour. Group 1947, Cat. no. 212.

painters the new Zealand landscape was a springboard for the development of the artist's personal vision. For John Summers, when reviewing the 1948 Group show, the achievement of artists such as Lusk, Woollaston and McCahon was that;

they have begun to live in New Zealand as painters, neither self-consciously stressing the fact by putting in the obvious and typical detail, nor on the other hand, painting in some no-man's land of the spirit as if New Zealand was totally irrelevant to their purposes. It does exist for them, quietly and naturally.⁷²

McCahon's early work had its roots in regionalist interests, but he transcended its limitations by introducing the figure into his landscape depictions.

In the mid 'forties he found his inspiration in the landscape of particular regions, Otago and Nelson, and he attempted to isolate the essence of the dominant land forms.

27 The characteristic shapes of the Nelson hills provide the setting

28 for his works with religious themes, the first series of which were exhibited in the 1947 show.⁷³ These paintings received a mixed reception, as McCahon himself commented;

Seeing and not seeing! Exhibiting the 1947 religious paintings... was like tossing a stone into a swarm of bees.⁷⁴

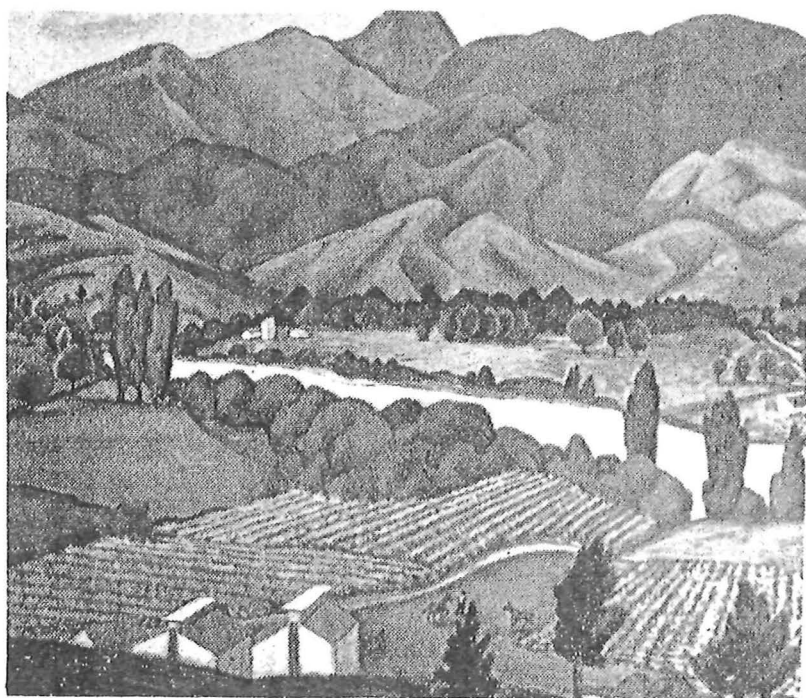
From its formation, the Group earned a reputation for exhibiting new and challenging work. The exhibitions in the 'forties, no less than those in the 'thirties, demonstrated

⁷² John Summers, "The Group Show", Landfall, Vol.III, no.1 (March 1948)p.63

⁷³ For example, *Landscape, Nelson*, 1947, oil on cardboard, coll. Hocken Library. Group Cat. no.160. *The Angel of the Annunciation*, 1947, oil on cardboard, coll. National Art Gallery. Group 1947, Cat. no.169.

⁷⁴ Colin McCahon, "Beginnings", p.9.

that the Group artists were willing to experiment and break with traditional conventions. The original decision by the founding members, to let artists themselves choose what to show was an important one for it ensured that a wide range of work was shown in the exhibitions, and encouraged the inclusion of work which broke new ground.



23. Doris Lusk, *Tobacco Fields, Pangatotora*, 1943, oil on canvas, 45.5 x 53.4 cm (Auckland City Art Gallery)



24. Louise Henderson, *Stream, Broken River*, watercolour.



25. Juliet Peter, *Geraldine*, 1943, watercolour,
56.3 x 70.9 cm, (The Artist).



26. Rata Lovell-Smith, *Gate on the Crest of the Scree*,
oil on canvas.



27. Colin McCahon, *The Angel of the Annunciation*, 1947, oil on cardboard, 64.7 x 50.8 cm (National Art Gallery)



28. Colin McCahon, *Landscape, Nelson*, 1947, oil on cardboard 43 x 54.9 cm (Hocken Library)

CHAPTER 4

THE WIDER CONTEXT
A COMPARISON WITH OTHER GROUPS OF ARTISTS

The Christchurch Group has been but one of a number of independent coteries of artists in New Zealand. It was, however, the longest surviving of them all, and in Christchurch no other group rose to challenge its supremacy.

A comparison with other independent bodies of artists can isolate the unique character of The Group that helps to explain why it flourished and survived for so long.

The editor of Art in New Zealand reported in 1934 that the movement toward the formation of independent associations of artists was:

a sign of the times here as overseas, for the younger generation to break away from conservative tradition and set a livelier tempo.¹

From at least the late nineteen-twenties in New Zealand and amongst younger artists in particular, there was a growing uneasiness and frustration at the unwillingness of the art establishment to face up to modern tendencies in expression. An examination of the latter and contemporary awareness of the problems which existed, will reveal the similarities of responses to them, including the formation of independent groups, and thereby clear the way for the appreciation of the particular character of The Group.

¹ "Ourselves", Art in New Zealand, Vol VI, No 1 (September 1933) p.6.

In common with most of the independent groups of artists formed in the first half of the twentieth century, The Group began in response to perceived deficiencies in existing art institutions, principally the art societies. These independent organisations arose to answer needs which artists felt were not accomplished by membership in the art societies, regarded as bastions of conservatism. Nevertheless, the artist who did not retain membership in an art society was an exception before the end of the nineteen-forties, for even if the artist disagreed with the way the societies were run, at least they provided an opportunity to exhibit work, at far less cost than an independently organised show. From the nineteen-fifties the more independent or progressively-minded artists were presented with more opportunities for exhibiting. But until the dealer gallery became an established feature in New Zealand, the Christchurch Group, along with similar organisations in other centres, represented a solution to the problem of exhibiting for such artists. As demonstrated in earlier chapters, The Group was seen to function best when it provided a venue where an artist could present a fuller statement of his or her ideas than was ever possible in an art society exhibition. The dealer gallery, however, could perform this function more successfully since the art dealer's "specific aim is to exhibit, stock and sell, contemporary New Zealand art",² and it was for this reason that The Group's useful-

² "The Role of the Dealer Gallery in New Zealand", Transcript of a radio talk narrated by Kenneth Blackburn. Clippingbook Vol V (1967-77), pp 37-48, Turnbull Library (Art Room).

ness declined. It was the attraction of presenting work through a dealer gallery rather than the exhibitions of independent groups which affected the art societies more in the long run. "J.N.K", reviewing the CSA's 1960 exhibition, made the observation that "several of the better known more or less professional painters are not exhibiting and others are thinly represented." The reason he suggested was that they found the one-man-show or exhibitions organised by small groups of artists "more inviting". The inevitable result, he believed, would be a change in emphasis in the Society's annual exhibition.³ Four years later, the same critic attributed the lack of exhibits by professional artists in the arts society exhibitions entirely to the growth of the dealer galleries, with the result that "Art society exhibitions, with their jumble-sale atmosphere, are increasingly left to the amateurs."⁴

All the main art societies were forced to update their policies or face extinction. The CSA's response in the 'fifties was to include a greater variety of work in its annual exhibitions, such as architectural drawing, pottery and photography. It was not until the next decade, however, that artists working in these disciplines were admitted as working members. In addition, the society began to rent wallspace for a small fee to encourage one or two-man shows.

³ J.N.K(night), "Society of Arts, Changes Noted at Exhibition", Christchurch Press, April 13, 1960, p 14.

⁴ J.N.K, "Society of Arts Autumn Show", Christchurch Press, April 16, 1964, p 18.

A move in 1968 to new premises provided artists with better exhibiting facilities. The society also continued to widen its interests to produce a greater diversity of shows. Apart from the society's role as an exhibiting body, it has also provided art tuition for both adults and children.⁵

Unlike the independent groups, the CSA and other art societies have managed to survive despite competition from dealer galleries by virtue of the broader base of their activities.

The art societies had originally been formed to provide a supportive organisation for the promotion, study and practice of the fine arts, and to hold exhibitions periodically.⁶ One significant difference, however, between the art societies and the independent groups lay in the art societies' encouragement to both amateurs and professional artists to contribute works. The major art societies in New Zealand were founded in the late nineteenth century by a combination of artists and educated men from other professions. Both classes of membership - 'working' and 'honorary' - were given the chance to participate in the running of the societies.

⁵ Canterbury Society of Arts, 1880-1980, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, 1980, ref pp 24-29. In 1980, the CSA had more members than any other art society in Australasia (page 31).

⁶ Based on the CSA and Auckland Society of Arts, ref. Canterbury Society of Arts 1880-1980, and Ron Tizard, The Auckland Society of Arts 1870-1970, A Centennial History, Auckland, 1971.

Art societies continued to encourage the enrolment of further honorary members, because their subscriptions were necessary to provide financial support for the societies' intended activities.

Initially the CSA gave each class of membership an equal voice in the affairs of the society in order to attract the interest of the public.⁷ But significantly, soon after its formation, several artist-members banded together to form their own group because of dissatisfaction with the structure of the Council and its decisions - principally about the future of the society,⁸ as well as the perennial problem of disappointment over the selection and hanging arrangements of works submitted for the annual exhibitions. It was for these kinds of reasons that the Palette Club was formed in 1889. It appears that like the later Group shows, these artists allowed a greater variety of work to be displayed in their exhibitions, including drawings and preliminary works, enabling the public to gain a more comprehensive idea of the working methods of artists. The club lasted for seven years, during which time some important working members of the CSA chose not to participate in the Society's annual exhibitions. Eventually the Society amended some of its policies. The ratio of working to honorary members on the council was altered in favour of the artists. A conspicuous feature of the independent groups was that they ensured that their control remained in the hands of the artists concerned.

⁷ Canterbury Society of Arts 1880-1980, p 6.

⁸ Ibid. p.8, about proposed extensions to the gallery.

Some independent groups, however, encouraged subscribing members, where the desire was to extend the activities of the organisation beyond the mounting of exhibitions. The honorary members' role in these groups was more restricted than in the art societies. In order to win the monetary support given by non-artist subscribers, inducements other than voting participation were instituted to cater for this category of membership. The National Art Association of New Zealand, which was founded in November 1924, provided a bulletin for its members which contained information on the Association's activities and other items of interest. Later, the subscribing members of the NZSoA benefited from purchasing privileges and occasional free gifts of etchings. In addition, the clubrooms and the library could be utilised by both artists and subscribing members. The Management Committee of the NZSoA actually included some non-artist members, although eight of the twelve had to be artists. Only these four elected laymen were empowered to vote at any meeting of the society.⁹ The National Art Association and the NZSoA both managed to attract artist and subscribing members but the growing number of members caused problems for both organisations, as the Association's Bulletin describes:

"The number of enrolments may be regarded as very satisfactory. This view, however, is not altogether shared by the President, the Secretary and those members of the Council on whose shoulders have fallen the burden of securing support to the Association."¹⁰

⁹ W. Basil Honour, "N.Z. Society of Artists", Art in New Zealand, Vol VI, No 1, p.27.

¹⁰ Bulletin of the National Art Association of New Zealand, Nos 7, 8 and 9 (July/August/September 1925).

Both organisations had ceased to operate within three years of their foundation. The Christchurch Group avoided the aforementioned problems by remaining a comparatively small organisation throughout its existence. Disagreement with the decisions of a management committee by the other artist members, another contributing factor to the demise of the NZSoA, was avoided by The Group - it simply never formed such a committee. Any decisions made by The Group, which principally revolved around when to hold exhibitions, and who to invite as guest exhibitors, were made by the unanimous vote of the local Christchurch members. Such apparent lack of organisation in The Group's running of its affairs apparently paid off.

The closest The Group came to having subscribing members was in the 'fifties when The Friends of The Group was formed. The scope of its activities, however, was mainly confined to assistance at The Group shows.

In 1930, the year after the Christchurch Group made its first major public appearance, Christopher Perkins drew attention to the different types of "co-operative organisations through which ... artists bring their work before the public."¹¹ These, he said, can be divided into two distinct groups which he labelled "The Academic" and "The Independent". The Independent artist's ideal is a one-man show or small group show where he can exhibit what

¹¹ Christopher Perkins, "N.Z. Academy Annual Exhibition", Art in New Zealand, Vol III, No 10 (December 1930) pp 105-6.

he likes and "make the best of his allotted space." The Christchurch Group, in fact, was one of the few early associations formed by artists which closely resembled his model of the Independent organisation.

The 'Academic' artist, on the other hand, "wants initials after his name." On the basis of certain remarks made by the President of the Academy, Dr Carbery,* Perkins claimed that the "Academic person is, or wishes to be thought, old fashioned."

(* In his opening speech he described an innovation introduced by the hanging committee, whereby the pictures considered to be 'modern' were to be hung together on one wall. Op.cit, page 105)

A committee selects the works to be hung in an Academic exhibition, to produce a show that is "a sort of decorator's triumph" and one in which the work of an artist "may be strewn around the place among hostile elements." The occasional work which does not agree with the committee's conception of the correct way a picture should be painted may be admitted but the essential appearance of the exhibitions remains much the same for year after year.

One of the chief criticisms of the CSA and other art societies generally, and one which did not diminish even when alterations were made to policies, was the continued conservatism of these institutions.

A review by 'Casca' of the CSA's annual exhibition of 1935 examined the justification for the society being labelled as the 'Royal Academy of New Zealand'. His conclusion

was that, indeed, "It is an appropriate if ambitious comparison", for "in short, it is conservative, solid, and guardedly representative."¹² The situation was no better in other centres, nor did it alter much over the next ten years as two reviews of the 1945 annual exhibition of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts indicate. The critic for the Listener asked two questions:

Did this Exhibition ... differ much from one in the 1890s? And would a visitor from that period have felt much startled by anything he saw?

The writer concluded that a few things may have startled,

but one imagines that the majority of paintings would have left him feeling secure in a known world.¹³

The other account described a factor which the reviewer believed contributed to the general impression that one show appeared much the same as those that had come before it:

More than one artist has told us that of all the work he sends in, he can always be quite certain that the Academy will hang that which pleases him least, and reject that which represents his more mature achievement. If this is so, then it is understandable why the painters whose work we see so regularly show no sign of advance.¹⁴

The comments expressed in these reviews echo Basil Honour's complaints of twelve years earlier. The existing

¹² Casca, "Canterbury Society of Arts Annual Exhibition", Art in New Zealand, Vol VII, No. 4 (June 1935) p 175.

¹³ J.E.P. "We've had Fifty-seven of Them", N.Z. Listener, Vol XIII, No 336 (November 30, 1945), p 6.

¹⁴ H.W. "The N.Z. Academy (or not much Fun)", The Arts in New Zealand, Vol XVII, No 4 (June/July 1945) p.20.

art institutions, he claimed:

stand for no consciously held idea of art, and remain anaesthetic to anything new and vital .. Mechanical vision and naturalistic representation are, generally speaking, all they are concerned with.¹⁵

To counteract the crowded banality of art society exhibitions, Perkins had several solutions in addition to the formation of independent groups. Victorianism, he stated:

is a state of unawareness to contemporary thought and taste. It can be cured by foreign travel in alert minds caught young.

He also advocated an elementary education in the appreciation of art be given to the young of the country.¹⁶

A.R.D. Fairburn noted in 1947 that there had been considerable improvement in New Zealand painting. He said, "We have seen a handful of very good painters develop fruitfully under great difficulties." But still he believed that "the general level of our painting - and of public taste - is much too low."¹⁷ In his review of The Group's Retrospective Show in 1947, he reiterated some of the solutions suggested earlier by Perkins to improve the situation facing New Zealand artists whom, he thought, "suffered from 'arrested development' as a result of the burden of having to paint for the New Zealand public."¹⁸ Fairburn

¹⁵ W.Basil Honour, "N.Z. Society of Artists", Art in New Zealand, Vol VI, No 1 (September 1933), pp 24-25.

¹⁶ Perkins, p 107.

¹⁷ A.R.D. Fairburn, "Some Reflections on New Zealand Painting", Landfall, Vol I, No 1 (March 1947), p 53.

¹⁸ A.R.D. Fairburn, "Art in Canterbury, Some Notes on the Group Show", Landfall, Vol II, No 1 (March 1948), p 48.

also put forward the suggestions that leading painters should be invited to New Zealand to work here for a few months and good exhibitions of contemporary works be toured around the country. Neither of these proposals was particularly new. Two early examples of projects designed to effect a change in New Zealand art production and appreciation were the importation of art teachers trained in Great Britain under the La Trobe Scheme; and the exhibitions of British art curated by the Fullers.

Unfortunately New Zealand artists who had travelled abroad either remained there or found on their return to New Zealand an unsympathetic cultural climate, and encountered difficulties getting their more advanced work accepted for exhibition. The '*Pleasure Garden Incident*' in Christchurch illustrates this, as well as demonstrating the conservatism of the city's various art institutions. The Canterbury Society of Arts requested that a selection of works by the expatriate Frances Hodgkins be sent on approval to New Zealand, but her work had developed beyond acceptance in her homeland. In 1949 the Council of the CSA declined to purchase any of the six paintings, said to be typical of the artist's later period and technique. When the painting *The Pleasure Garden* was offered as a donation to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, the advisory committee to the City Council (which administers the Gallery) recommended that the gift should be refused on the grounds that it was not a good example of her work. The

painting was eventually accepted in 1951.¹⁹ In the meantime two other works had been bought by groups of subscribers and presented to galleries whose trustees had also refused to purchase.²⁰

The three artists who comprised the advisory committee - Archibald Nicoll, Cecil Kelly and Richard Wallwork - were prominent figures in establishment art circles in Christchurch. They were in controlling positions in the Society of Arts and the School of Art, as well as the Art Gallery. The dispute over the acceptance of the *Pleasure Garden* exposed the difficulty of implementing any kind of progressive plan for the Gallery if the advisory committee continued to represent "only one school of painting".²¹ The committee was subsequently enlarged to five members.

The Fullers hoped to educate artists and art audiences through the exhibitions they organised in the late nineteen-twenties and early 'thirties of 'Contemporary Works' of British origin. The paintings, mainly by Royal Academicians, were held up as exemplary models for New Zealand artists to follow. The total of six exhibitions toured by the Fullers were supplemented by others such as the Empire Loan Collection in 1934 and the Contemporary Canadian Exhibition in 1938.

¹⁹ Refer Chapter 1, pp 22-23.

²⁰ *The Ruined Tin Mine, Wales*, was presented to the Suter Gallery, and *Still-Life with Fruit Dishes* was presented to the Dunedin Gallery.

²¹ Margaret Frankel defined the committee thus in her article "The *Pleasure Garden* Incident", Yearbook of the Arts in New Zealand, No 5, Wellington, 1949, p 16.

Inherent in their formation and in the exhibitions held by independent groups was the desire to foster greater awareness and appreciation by artists, critics and the public, of new tendencies in art, since it was believed that art societies had long since ceased to fulfil this role. Basil Honour, spokesman for the NZSoA, saw this as an essential step, if the boundaries of art expression were to expand, and criticism was to advance in New Zealand. Art societies were blamed for the stagnation in art production and appreciation, and the reason given by Honour was "that they have made the fundamental error of allowing laymen to become the arbiters of their destiny."²² The opinion of Roland Hipkins, expressed in his review of the 1933 New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts exhibition was that the stereotyped productions to be found year after year in art society annual exhibitions were fostered by the art societies reflecting the feelings and opinions of the public for too long.²³ At the two Group shows opened by Dr G.M. Lester, he passed remarks about the CSA and the acceptance of paintings by its committee. The dilemma facing the committee, Lester said in 1931, was whether to accept work he described as "pretty woolly sentimental stuff",²⁴ or incur unpopularity by rejecting it. In 1935 he commented that the annual exhibitions of the Society of Arts perpetuated the Victorian

²² W. Basil Honour, "N.Z. Society of Artists", Art in New Zealand, Vol VI, No 1 (September 1933), p 24.

²³ Roland Hipkins, "N.Z. Academy of Fine Arts Annual Exhibition", Art in New Zealand, Vol VI, No 2 (December 1933), p 67.

²⁴ "Painting and Sculpture Work of 1931 Group Exhibition at Art Gallery", Christchurch Press, September 10, 1931, p 13. Note - Dr Lester had been president and on the Council of the CSA.

taste, because that was what sold best.²⁵ Dr Lester supported The Group because its exhibitions were "full of adventurous spirit," something missing in the larger annual exhibitions of the Society of Arts.²⁶

Baverstock's original statement about The Group did not directly criticise the CSA for its conservatism. He did suggest, however, that it might be good for art if the society broke up into groups which used the galleries frequently, since that way the works of each artist could be better appreciated. Subsequent Group shows proved this to be the case, judging from the response of the critics to The Group's method of display. Baverstock concluded:

With a movement that resulted in many shows, in addition to, rather than in place of the big annual exhibitions, it is probable that public interest would increase, the art societies would benefit considerably, and creative art would be a far more joyous thing.²⁷

The CSA continued to hold its large annual exhibitions, although a report in Art in New Zealand in 1936 indicates that The Group and NZSoA had made some impact on the society. The writer states that "it is evident that the art world has been disturbed somewhat" and that the adventurous artists "are likely to get a better chance with hanging committees than formerly ... Perhaps the now defunct Society of Artists had something to do with this."²⁸

²⁵ "Taste in Art. Victorian and Present Day. Exhibition by the 1935 Group", Christchurch Press, October 9, 1935, p 16.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ W.S. Baverstock, "The 1929 Group. Art Notes, Christchurch", Art in New Zealand, Vol II, No 5 (September 1929) p 63.

²⁸ "Art Notes. Christchurch", Art in New Zealand, Vol VIII, No 4 (June 1936) p 240.

Even if the works of the more progressive artists were included in the Society's annual exhibitions, the intentions of the artists would be difficult to appreciate when their works were intermingled with all the other paintings in the large exhibitions, and so the dissatisfaction with the art society persisted. This is made evident in reviews in the nineteen-forties. For example, in a review of the Rutland Group exhibition in 1945, A.J.C. Fisher produced a list of grievances, including many of the earlier complaints against the art societies. He concluded by stating: "I think it would be a good thing for the artist and the fine arts if the old Society of Arts dies out."²⁹ In addition to the usual complaints about the power the honorary members had to affect decisions of the society, Fisher also pointed out the possibility that artists themselves did not make fairer selection committees. He argued that since an artist must have a "great belief in his own outlook", it is difficult for him to "reorient his mind with the speed necessary when work of all kinds is being examined."³⁰ The solution he believed was to form groups of artists united by similar outlooks, and any addition to the membership of a group should be by unanimous agreement of all members. Each member would have the right to hang the same number of works selected by him or herself. The Christchurch Group operated in this fashion, but was not formed by members who had a similar

²⁹ A.J.C. Fisher, "The Rutland Group", The Arts in New Zealand, Vol XVII, No 2 (February/March 1945), p 22. See also, for example, Alison Pickmere, "The Local Royal Academy", Home and Building, Vol XI, No 5 (April/May 1949), pp 35-37.

³⁰ Ibid., p 21.

outlook except in so far as they wished to mount independent exhibitions. They were, however, sympathetic to modern developments. Fisher himself had encouraged the formation of an independent association of artists, the Rutland Art Group. This Auckland based group was perhaps The Group's closest counterpart in another centre, and thus it is worth making a comparison of the Christchurch Group with the Rutland Group.

The Rutland Group was formed at the instigation of Jack Crippen, in 1935,³¹ eight years later than The Group. Membership began at approximately fifteen and soon increased.³² The Rutland Group voted itself out of existence in 1958;³³ thus it operated for about half the length of time of the Christchurch Group.

The Rutland Group was formed by ex-Elam students and the first display of their work appeared in a section of the Elam School of Art annual exhibition in 1935. Thereafter, their annual exhibitions were held either in the Auckland Society of Arts' clubrooms or at the Auckland Art Gallery. Like the majority of Group members, those who were involved with the Rutland Group also maintained their membership in the Art Society and regularly participated in its annual exhibitions.

The Rutland Group's annual exhibitions were about

³¹ "Art Notes, Auckland", Art in New Zealand, Vol IX, No 2 (December 1936), p 109.

³² I.G. Eise, "Rutland Art Group", Art in New Zealand, Vol XIV, No 2 (December 1941) p 71.

³³ Rutland Art Group Minutes Book (gifted by Phyllis Crowley to Elam School of Fine Arts Library).

the same size as The Group's. Before 1950 they comprised approximately one hundred works, even though its membership exceeded that of The Group's at this time.

The early exhibitions mounted by The Rutland Group consisted of a variety of work in different media, including painting, drawings, various kinds of print making, metalwork, weaving and pottery. Fisher not only advocated the formation of this group, but he also encouraged the young artists to produce and show work which differed from the Society of Arts, and at least initially their exhibitions were described as illustrative of "present day tendencies".³⁴ As a result the Rutland Group, like its southern counterpart, sold few works at its exhibitions.³⁵

The Rutland Group, however, differed from the Christchurch Group in a number of fundamental ways. First, the former restricted its membership to past and present students of the Elam School of Art.³⁶ While it is true that the founding members of The Group had all attended the Canterbury College School of Art, the membership soon included artists from many different backgrounds. Originally the small group of friends had banded together for the purpose of hiring a studio and models to work from and this studio soon became a meeting place for artists with similar sympathies. Evelyn Page described how The Group made it a

³⁴ See, for example, "Art Notes: Auckland", Art in New Zealand, Vol X, No 2 (December 1937) p 112.

³⁵ For example, in 1951 no works were sold; 1952 - five paintings and two craft pieces sold; 1953 - one work sold. Details from "Minutes Book".

³⁶ I.G. Elise; supported by comments made in conversation with Ron Tizard.

policy to invite only the most modern of their contemporaries,³⁷ irrespective of where they had been trained. For their exhibitions guest artists were nominated and if agreement was reached amongst the existing members the nominees would be asked to participate and in many cases were invited to become full members thereafter.

The Rutland Group's membership grew considerably and in 1943 it was felt necessary to elect a management committee of five.³⁸ Two years later a limit was placed on membership and in order that younger artists could join, it was suggested that members who no longer had the time or interest in active participation should relinquish their membership.³⁹ Artists wishing to join had to submit six pieces of work to the committee, two of which had to be pencil works. These rules were designed to ensure that a high standard of work would be maintained in the exhibitions.

Soon after its formation, the Rutland Group acquired clubrooms for work and also for meetings. These were held once a month and gave members the opportunity to bring their work in for criticism and discussion. In the 'fifties meetings took place where talks on a wide range of topics, and practical demonstrations were given. In addition evenings were arranged when members could work from the model, or set subjects.⁴⁰

³⁷ Refer Chapter 1, p 3.

³⁸ "Art Notes: Rutland Art Group", Art in New Zealand, Vol XV, No 4 (June 1943) p. 2.

³⁹ "Art Notes. Auckland, the Rutland Group", The Arts in New Zealand; Vol XVII, No 3 (April/May 1945) p. 45.

⁴⁰ Outlined in the "Minutes Book".

To be eligible to participate in the Rutland Group's annual exhibitions, artists had to have presented at least six works for group criticism during the year. Members also had to include at least one drawing in their exhibition offering. A later amendment specified that only original work which had not been shown before in Auckland could be submitted for exhibition.⁴¹

The Rutland Group was a working association of artists which held exhibitions, whereas the Christchurch Group was primarily an exhibiting body. Of the two, the Christchurch-based organisation more closely resembled Perkins's outline of the 'Independent Group', for it had no organisational structure and the members could select their own work for exhibitions and have all that work hung.

Kenneth Thomas, a spokesman for the Rutland Group, outlined how it had well-established precedents overseas for:

the principle of mutual help and straight criticism which prevails among these artists ... The work done by members is strictly individual and free, but is tempered and sharpened by the shafts of the Group as a whole, thus following closely the procedure in such centres as the London Sketch Club, the New English Art Group, the School of Paris, and a practice current in American schools.⁴²

The Group attempted to add to its ranks only those artists who "endeavour to enlarge their experience with every new work". The common bond was a desire to work in-

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Kenneth Thomas, "Some Paintings from the Rutland Group - 1950", Home and Building, Vol XIII No 1 (August/September 1950) p. 72.

dependently, and without the feeling that their work "must first pass a censor" before being exhibited.⁴³

The members of the Rutland Group, wrote Thomas:

are bound together by a sense of loyalty to the school in Rutland Street,* where so much that is sound and unalterable in technique was so painstakingly taught and practised.

The influence of the school is evident in their work, but any breakaway from accepted form is encouraged, provided it can withstand the criticism of others in the group.⁴⁴

(* *The Elam School of Fine Arts*)

The general tendency of the members, he added, was "toward Romantic and Lyric types of painting".

Some reviewers of their exhibitions were surprised at the difference of approach by each of the exhibitors, considering that they had all received their training at the same institution. John Weeks believed that "a certain influence could be traced". Still, he found their exhibitions refreshing because it was apparent that each artist was nevertheless "concerned with solving his or her particular problems and individual temperaments were discernible."⁴⁵ Una Platts, in a review of their 1948 exhibition, noted the weaknesses and strengths of working closely as a group. The stimulation received through contact with each other was, she suggested, a positive factor, but in their

⁴³ "The 1945 Group", The Arts in New Zealand, Vol VII, No 6 (January/February 1946), p 22.

⁴⁴ Kenneth Thomas, p 36.

⁴⁵ John Weeks, "The Rutland Group", The Arts in New Zealand, Vol XVII, No 6 (January/February 1946) pp 18-19. Ref also I.G. Eise.

work she detected "a fear of breaking away from the group criterion ... and the overall impression was of sombre-toned sameness."⁴⁶

The exhibitions of the Christchurch Group were almost certainly guaranteed to contain considerable stylistic variation as well as a diversity of media because of its wide ranging membership. This was maintained through the practice of inviting the participation of guest exhibitors. It was arguably this policy which enabled The Group to maintain its vitality and produce stimulating exhibitions year after year. As stated by one member in 1945, their work "added new vigour and fresh ideas" to the shows.⁴⁷

By the late 'forties the Rutland Group was no longer the only independent group of artists exhibiting in Auckland, so that Fairburn could write in 1948:

Gone are the days when Auckland had one art exhibition a year ... We are becoming more used to the idea that art is diverse; and we are beginning to realise the need for formation of groups with common sympathies, as well as for the maintaining of the central meeting ground provided by the Society of Arts.⁴⁸

He mentions in his review two other independent artist organisations in addition to the Rutland Group: the New Group, who placed their emphasis on draughtsmanship, and The Fellowship of New Zealand Artists, a more traditional

⁴⁶ Una Platts, "The Rutland Group", Home and Building, Vol XI, No 1 (August/September 1948), pp 45 and 47.

⁴⁷ "The 1945 Group", p 22.

⁴⁸ A.R.D. Fairburn, "Art is Many Things", N.Z. Listener, Vol XIX, No 429 (November 26, 1948), p 7.

group. Of the Rutland Group, however, he commented:

Collectively they have advanced the standard of painting in Auckland many notches ahead of that which obtained twenty years ago.⁴⁹

His statement recalls the contemporary critics' appraisal of the exhibitions of the Christchurch Group. Both these independent organisations provided a much needed spur to individual artists to break with conventional and readily acceptable modes of expression.

In 1948, Fairburn - like Platts - found that in the Rutland Group's exhibitions "a certain sameness (had) become evident, a tendency to become repetitious." Three years later, E.H. McCormick was even harsher in his criticism of the Rutland Group, which he said, "avowedly steers a middle course ending in the inevitable haven of compromise, a safe mediocrity." The works, he continued, "make no impact on either sense or intellect", and have no "pretensions to modernity."⁵⁰

The Rutland Group lost its more innovative members to other independent groups such as "the contemporary artists". As opportunities for artists to exhibit work generally increased in the 'fifties, the number of artists attending the Rutland Group's meetings and working nights dropped considerably. At the annual general meeting in 1958, it was decided that "perhaps the Rutland Group had served its purpose and should disband, having started out

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ E.H. McCormick, "Auckland Painting", Landfall, Vol V, No 5 (December 1951), p 309-10.

as a revolutionary group twenty-five years ago ..."⁵¹

In Wellington* and Dunedin independent groups also

(For example, the Thursday Group who met at the Architectural Centre.)*

arose in the early 'fifties. The Independent Group of Dunedin exhibited with the Christchurch Group in 1951, just as members of the Rutland Group had sent a selection of works to be displayed at an earlier Group show in 1945. Some of the members of the Dunedin Group - Rudolf Gopas, Frank Gross and W.J. Reed - subsequently became regular exhibitors with The Group.

In the nineteen-fifties the Group suffered no loss of impetus, unlike the Rutland Group, relying as it did on its reputation for showing a cross-section of the latest work by a selection of New Zealand artists.

After 1950 The Group became an even more diffuse organisation, the number of guest exhibitors increased, many of whom only exhibited on the one occasion. A small number of members including Olivia Spencer Bower, Leo Bensemann, Doris Lusk, W.A. Sutton, Colin McCahon, M.T. Woollaston, J. Peter and Rita Angus, who had joined The Group in the nineteen-thirties and 'forties, continued to contribute consistently to its show up to the nineteen-seventies. However, relatively few artists who joined after the 1947 Retrospective showed with The Group as

⁵¹ "Minute Book", 6 March 1958.

regularly as the aforementioned painters, an indication of the increased opportunities for work to be exhibited elsewhere. It appears that The Group had no problem in either attracting guest exhibitors or enrolling new members even after the concept of its shows was attacked as outdated in reviews. To be invited to participate meant a form of recognition and acceptance by peers, as Trevor Moffitt has described:

To someone living and painting in Invercargill in the early 1960s, The Group show meant ... that someone cared about what you were doing. Cared to the extent that you were being invited to exhibit with many of the most outstanding artists in New Zealand. Not only were you being invited to exhibit but no selection was made of the work submitted which left you, as a result, feeling encouraged and somehow more professional.⁵²

In total, over the fifty-year period of The Group's existence, more than three hundred artists, craftsmen and architects participated in its shows. By the time it disbanded in 1977, The Group could claim to have shown work by most of New Zealand's significant artists and craftsmen, either as full members or guest exhibitors.

⁵² "The Group 1927-1977", Survey No 16 (November 1977), Christchurch City Council and Robert McDougall Art Gallery, p 16.

FINAL NOTE

The Group did not begin as a revolutionary organisation. As one reviewer correctly observed in 1932;

the members are not yet animated by revolutionary notions, so they can hardly be described as secessionists with a doctrine.¹

The desire of the founders of the Group to evolve in their own way, and without unnecessary constraints led to a need for some independence. Their immediate need was to mount exhibitions in which they could select and hang their own work. The Group did this as simply as possible; without doctrine to cause dissension and to distract the members from their individual development, and without the type of organisational structure which had the potential of removing the control from the hands of the artists.

The Group quickly earned a reputation for showing the 'latest'. In this more sympathetic environment, members felt encouraged to show more experimental work. In addition the format of its shows favoured those artists who experienced difficulty in having their work accepted for exhibition elsewhere.

The Group developed a small but enthusiastic following and its annual exhibitions were eagerly awaited. The guest speakers who opened the early exhibitions, as well as the critics, were optimistic about the Group's potential for

¹ Criticus, "Canterbury Society of Arts Exhibition" Art in New Zealand, Vol.IV, no.16 (June 1932)p.264.

influencing the future of New Zealand art. Its exhibitions did not lead to the "development of a National school of painting" as at least one critic had hoped²; but they did contain a significant proportion of works which demonstrated some awareness of the issues relating to 'modernism'. In this respect the Group provided a much needed alternative to the more conservative and less coherent annual exhibitions of the art societies. By the Retrospective in 1947, it was apparent to critics that the work of members showed signs of development, and that the Group was indeed contributing to the advancement of New Zealand art.

The most important period of the Group's existence was in the 'thirties and 'forties when opportunities for exhibiting were limited. On a personal level, Leo Bensemann, no doubt expressed the feeling of other members when he commented on the value of the Group to him;

My association with The Group and many of the members greatly enriched my own development in many ways and for that alone I am forever grateful. No doubt we could have survived without one another. But only just.³

² "Exhibition of Paintings. "The 1932 Group" Modern Spirit Shown." Christchurch Press, Sept. 6, 1932, p.11

³ "The Group 1927-1977", Survey, No.16, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, (Nov. 1977)p.12.

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1. NOTES ON THE GROUP AND NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF ARTS EXHIBITION CATALOGUES

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I have been unable to locate catalogues for the 1931 and 1946 Group shows. Partial reconstruction of the catalogues has been possible from reviews (ref - Bibliography of Reviews and Other Material Relating to Group Exhibitions).

(i) 1931 Group Show

(Please note - the numbers in brackets are the catalogue number of the work.)

FRANCIS SHURROCK

- (5) *Cloudy Afternoon* watercolour
- (9) *In the Home of the Nor'westers* oil
 - Harvest Sunset*
 - Mount Barron*
- (14) *Lake Summer Road* oil
- (15) *Grey Day* oil

VIOLA MACMILLAN BROWN

- (25) *The Path Through the Fields*
- (27) *Across the Plains*
- (28) *Trees in Winter*

EVELYN POLSON

- (33) *Interior* oil
- (34) *The God Child* oil
- (35) *Mechtildes* oil

EDITH COLLIER

- (37) *Hyde Park in Autumn*
- (38) *A Fisherman's Cottage*
 - At the Edge of the Bush*
- (41) *St Bartholomew's Church*
- (45) *An Irish Fisherman*

d'AUVERGNE BOXALL

- (46) *Low Tide, Vanuilagi*
 - Barbados St Bridge* oil
 - Vanua Levu, Fiji*
 - Landscape, Fiji*

JAMES COOK

- (51) *Frosty Morning, near Kaikoura*
Avignon and The Rhone
Mt Ventoux and the Ouveze Valley
The Road, Kaikoura oil

R.N. FIELD

- (59) *Tomahawk Lagoon*
Doreen
 (61) *The Adoration*
Gabriel's Trumpet
Study for An Altarpiece
Christ at the Well
Woman's Head pastel
 (66) *Story of Mankind*
 (67) *Woodhaugh*

MARGARET ANDERSON

- Winter Morning*
The Tall Chimneys

W.H. MONTGOMERY

- (85) *On the Beach*
C.E. Montague 1889

W.S. BAVERSTOCK

- (91) *Major*
Astrophysics
 (97) *Darra, Lyttelton* watercolour

JAMES COOK

- (105) *Studies*
 (107) *Forty Winks* pencil drawing

EVELYN POLSON

- (126) *Frederick Page, Esq* pencil drawing

d'Auvergne Boxall

- (132) *Pont Neuf, Paris* pencil drawing
 (133) *Silver Street, London* lithograph

R.N. Field

- (138) *River and the Sea*
 (139) *Head in Stone*
 Elijah terracotta
 Christabel marble
 (142) *Torso*
 (143) *Head in Stone*

F.A. Shurrock

- Life Size Bust of R.N. Field*
 Design for an Architectural Feature
 Miss Kennan marble
 Garden Ornament
 (148) *Head Study*
 XIII Century Sculptor stone
 (150) *The Cat*
 (151) *Head for Bronze*

(ii) 1946 Group Show

J.A. Johnstone

Midday Lyttelton Harbour
From Church Bay
Near Hammer

Rona Fleming

Autumn Governor's Bay
Passing the Akaroa Light

Rata Lovell Smith

Gate on the Crest

W. A. SUTTON

Apricot Orchard

W. J. REED

Foxhole

Torment

Camouflage

The other exhibitors were:

Margaret Anderson

Douglas MacDiarmid

Leo Bensemann

Colin McCahon

Olivia Spencer Bower

Evelyn Page

Rita Angus

Juliet Peter

Austen Deans

Cora Wilding

R. N. Field

M. T. Woollaston

Louise Henderson

and guest exhibitor

Doris Lusk

Fred Shewell

INDEX OF GROUP SHOW EXHIBITORS, 1927-1977

The black bar indicates the year(s) in which the exhibitor participated.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY OF REVIEWS AND OTHER MATERIAL RELATING
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This bibliography is arranged in chronological order, under exhibition dates, in order to facilitate its use in conjunction with the Index of Exhibitors. Reports of opening night attendance and speeches, reviews, illustrations and other relevant material are included. Letters placed in the left-hand margin provide an indication of the nature of the item.

- S: Opening night speeches and attendance reports
- R: Review
- I: Illustration only
- O: Other related items

1929

- O W.S. Baverstock, "The 1929 Group", Art in New Zealand, Vol II, No 5, September 1929, pp 62-63.

illus: E. Page, *December Morn*, col. Pl.I, p 7
S.B. Vincent, *Wisteria*, Pl.V, p 31
C. Wilding, *Leysin, Switzerland*, Pl.VII, p 33.

- S "Private View at Art Gallery", Christchurch Times, September 10, 1929, p 3.
- S "Exhibition of Paintings. The 1929 Group", Christchurch Press, September 10, 1929, p 2.
- R Chiaroscuro, "A Fine Exhibition of Paintings by the 1929 Group are in the Art Gallery", Christchurch Sun, September 10, 1929, p 13.
- R Professor James Shelley, "The 1929 Group. Exhibition of Paintings", Christchurch Times, September 10, 1929, p 14.
- R "Art Notes, Christchurch", Art in New Zealand, Vol II, No 6, December 1929, pp 141-2.

1931

- O "Art Exhibition Held. Christchurch Painters Show their Work. 1931 Private View", Christchurch Star, September 10, 1931, p 10.
- O "Revolt in Art. Exhibition of Paintings at Art Gallery", Christchurch Star, September 10, 1931, p 4.
- O "The 1931 Group. Exhibition of Paintings", Christchurch Press, September 10, 1931, p 2.
- O "The 1931 Group's Exhibition of Work is Opened at the Art Gallery", Christchurch Sun, September 10, 1931, p 3.
- R Chiaroscuro, "Impressive Exhibition at Art Gallery, Sculpture and Paintings by 1931 Group", Christchurch Sun, September 10, 1931, p 7.
- R "Painting and Sculpture. Work of 1931 Group. Exhibition at Art Gallery", Christchurch Press, September 10, 1931, p 13.
- R Professor James Shelley, "Exhibition at Art Gallery. The 1931 Group. Work of Importance", Christchurch Times, September 14, 1931, p 2.
- R "The 1931 Group Exhibition", Art in New Zealand, Vol IV, No 14, December 1931, pp 122-128.

illus: R.N. Field, *Head Carved Direct in Stone*, Pl.XI, p 123
F.A. Shurrock, *Life-size Bust of R.N. Field*, Pl.XII, p 124
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I "Art Exhibition by Members of The 1931 Group" - illustration.
Christchurch Press, September 10, 1931, p 11.

I R.N. Field, *Head in Stone*, Christchurch Press, September 15,
1931, p 11.

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S "Exhibition of 1932 Group is Opened. Many Visitors Attend a
Private View", Christchurch Sun, September 6, 1932, p 4.
(Also note under "Local & General", p 2).

S "Private View of Work. 1932 Group of Artists. Large Attendance
at Art Gallery", Christchurch Times, September 6, 1932, p 4.

S "Private View. Exhibition of the 1932 Group of Artists. Large
Gathering of Friends", Christchurch Star, September 6, 1932,
p 9.

S "American Art. Individuality Encouraged in Students. Revolt
Against Tradition", Christchurch Star, September 6, 1932, p 9.

S "Art in America. Supremacy of Modern Manner. Address by
Professor Shelley", Christchurch Press, September 6, 1932, p 7.

S "Modern Manner Rules. Professor Shelley's Views of American
Art Progress", Christchurch Sun, September 6, 1932, p 5.

R "A Good Display. Work of the 1932 Group. This Year's Exhibition",
Christchurch Times, September 6, 1932, p 3.

R Chiaroscuro - "Exhibition of 1932 Group. Much Experimental Work
in Paintings and Sketches", Christchurch Sun, September 7 1932
p 7.

R "Exhibition of Paintings. 'The 1932 Group'. Modern Spirit Shown",
Christchurch Press, September 6, 1932, p 11.

R "1932 Group Exhibition", Art in New Zealand, Vol V, No 18
(December 1932), pp 97-98.

illus: R.N. Field, *Miss Kelsey*, col. Pl.VII, p 93
F.A. Shurrock, *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, Pl.IX, p 95
A.H. Cook, *Ruins, Napier*, Pl.VIII, p 96

I James Cook, *Still-Life*, Christchurch Sun, September 6, 1932, p 14

I Madeline Vyner, *Dance*, Christchurch Sun, September 6, 1932, p 9.

I Christopher Perkins, *Brickworks*
Francis Shurrock, *Panel for the McDougall Art Gallery*
Christchurch Press, September 6, 1932, p 9.

1935

- S "Private View. Interesting Exhibition", Christchurch Press, October 9, 1935, p 2.
- S "Modern Trend in Art. Exhibition Launched. Dr Lester Depreciates Victorian Taste. Work of the 1935 Group", Christchurch Star-Sun, October 9, 1935, p 5.
- R "Taste in Art. Victorian and Present Day. Exhibition by 'The 1935 Group'", Christchurch Press, October 9, 1935, p 16.
- R "Art Notes - Christchurch", Art in New Zealand, Vol VIV, No 2 December 1935, p 116-117.
- I "Art Exhibition", Ngaio Marsh, *Rumba*, Christchurch Press, October 9, 1935, p 18.

1936

- S "Private View Night. 1936 Group Invites Guests. Interesting Exhibition", Christchurch Star-Sun, November 18, 1936, p 4.
- S "Private View. Exhibition of Art", Christchurch Press, November 18, 1936, p 2.
- S "New Zealanders and Art. Defeatist Attitude. Criticism of General Outlook", Christchurch Press, November 18, 1936, p 5.
- R "The 1936 Group. Interesting Paintings. Work of Progressive Artists", Christchurch Press, November 18, 1936, p 5.
- R "Art Notes - Christchurch", Art in New Zealand, Vol IX, No 1 September 1936, p 111.
- I Chrystabel Aitken, *Cats*
Phyllis Drummond Bethune, *Summer Morning, Lake Wanaka*
Christchurch Press, November 18, 1936, p 16.

1938

- S "Exhibition of Art. Heads Last Night's Social Gatherings", Christchurch Star-Sun, August 23, 1938, p 5.
- S "The 1938 Group. Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings", Christchurch Press, August 23, 1938, p 2.
- S "Art in Schools. New Development. More Expressive Work", Christchurch Press, August 23, 1938, p 3.
- R "Modern Artists. Work of 1938 Group. Originality and Skill", Christchurch Press, August 23, 1938, p 3.
- R "Art Notes - Christchurch", Art in New Zealand, Vol XI, No 1, September 1938, p 47-48.

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- S/ "Exhibition of Work of the 1940 Group is Opened", Christchurch Star-Sun, September 21, 1940, p 9.
- S/ "Celebration of Centennial. Artists Small Part Regretted. Opening of the 1940 Group's Exhibition", Christchurch Press, September 23, 1940, p 8.
- S/ "The 1940 Group. Exhibition of Paintings", Christchurch Press, September 24, 1940, p 9.
- O "1940 Art Group", Christchurch Star-Sun, September 24, 1940, p 3.
- R/ Charles Grignon, "The 1940 Group. Varied and Interesting Exhibition. Work of Younger Artists", Christchurch Press, September 28, 1940, p 14.
- R/ "Art Notes - Christchurch", Art in New Zealand, Vol XIII, No 2, December 1940, pp 105-6.
- illus: J.A. Johnstone, *The Sally Port*
 R.N. Field, *Son and Heir*
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- R.L. Smith, *Christchurch Spring*
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- C. McCahon, *Landscape with Trees*
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 T. Woollaston, *Mapua Landscape*] p 94

1943

- S/ "Conservatism in Art. Dr I.L.G. Sutherland's Criticism. Exhibition by 1943 Group", Christchurch Press, November 5, 1943, p 6.
- R/ Charles Grignon, "The Group Exhibition", Christchurch Press, November 6, 1943, p 2.

1945

- S/ "Group Art Exhibition Opened in City", Christchurch Star-Sun, October 31, 1945, p 3.
- S/ "The Group 1945. Exhibition Opened", Christchurch Press, October 31, 1945, p 8.
- R/ M.B. "The Group 1945 Exhibition", Christchurch Press, November 7, 1945, p 5.

- R "The 1945 Group, Christchurch", The Arts in New Zealand, Vol XVII, No 6, January/February 1946, pp 22-27.

illus: R. Angus, *Portrait of John Bush*
Olivia Spencer Bower, *Playing Records*, p 24.

1946

- S "The Group. 1946 Exhibition", Christchurch Press, November 5, 1946, p 2.
- S "Individual Methods Shown in Display of Artists' Work", Christchurch Star-Sun, November 5, 1946, p 6.
- R L.H.B. "The Group. Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings", Christchurch Press, November 7, 1946, p 9.

1947

- I M. Frankel and R. Lovell-Smith etc., Christchurch Star-Sun, November 3, 1947, p 3.
- S "Exhibition of Paintings by Artist Group", Christchurch Star-Sun, November 3, 1947, p 3.
- O "The Group Show. Retrospective Exhibition", Christchurch Press, November 4, 1947, p 2.
- R "Exhibition by 'The Group'", New Zealand Listener, Vol XVII, No 439, November 21, 1947, p 9.
- illus: Douglas MacDiarmid, *Skye, 1947*
W.J. Reed, *Road to Deep Stream*
A.A. Deans, *The Red Hat*
- R A.R.D. Fairburn, "Art in Canterbury. Some Notes on the Group Show", Landfall Vol 2, No 1, March 1948, p 46-50.

1948

- O "Work of Francis Hodgkins. Request for No Review. Explanation by Mr W.S. Baverstock", Christchurch Press, October 29, 1948, p 8.
- R John Summers, "The Group Show", Landfall, Vol 3, No 1, March 1949, p 60-63.

1949

- O "Variety is Keynote of Christchurch Art Group 1949 Show", Christchurch Star-Sun, October 25, 1949, p 3.
- I "Group Hold Annual Exhibition", Christchurch Star-Sun, October 25, 1949, p 3.
- illus: Rita Angus, *Portrait of R. Gormack*

0 "Artist's Exhibition Attracts Interest", Christchurch Star-Sun, October 26, 1949, p 6.

R Chrome Yellow, "Art Exhibition. The 1949 Group Show", Christchurch Press, October 27, 1949, p 3.

1950

S "Group Show Opened. Exhibition of Wide Variety", Christchurch Press, June 27, 1950, p 3.

0 "Group Show Sets High Standard in New Zealand Art", Christchurch Star, June 27, 1950, p 3.

1951

R "The Group Art Exhibition. Striking Paintings by W.A. Sutton", Christchurch Press, October 16, 1951, p 3.

I "Old Subject, New Treatment"
(illus: W.A. Sutton, *St Sebastian*)

R "Wide Variety in Art Exhibition", Christchurch Star-Sun, October 15, 1951, p 4.

1952

R "Group Show. Interesting Work Displayed", Christchurch Press, October 27, 1952, p 11.

R O'R, "Controversy Theme for Group Show", Christchurch Star-Sun, October 29, 1952, p 2.

R John Summers, "Commentary. The Group Show", Landfall, Vol 7, No 1, March 1953, pp 59-62.

illus: Olivia Spencer Bower, *The shed at 'Enys'* (watercolour)
John Drawbridge, *Woman* (lithograph)
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1953

0 "Variety, Colour Keynote of Group Show", Christchurch Star-Sun, October 10, 1953, p 7.

R "Group Show. Interesting Variety of Exhibits. Painting, Sculpture, Pottery", Christchurch Press, October 16, 1953, p 7.

R "Group Show Offers Vitality, Originality", Christchurch Star-Sun, October 22, 1953, p 7.

R John Oakley, "Keeping Up With the Arts. The Christchurch Group Show", Home and Building, Vol XVI, No 9, February 1, 1954, p 37, p 64.

illus: Juliet Peter, *Horses*.

1954

- S "Group Show Opened", Christchurch Press, October 4, 1954, p 6.
- R "Annual Group Show Inspiring Exhibition by Mature Artists", Christchurch Star-Sun, October 4, 1954, p 9.
- R John Oakley, "Two Exhibitions Held in Christchurch. The 1954 Group Show", Home and Building, Vol 17, No 9, February 1, 1955, p 44, p 49.
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- O "Group Show is Highlight of City Art Year", Christchurch Star-Sun, November 12, 1955, p 3.
- I "Two Christchurch Artists", Christchurch Star-Sun, November 12, 1955, p 1.
W.A. Sutton holding pot by Doris Lusk, talking with Rita Angus.
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- R O'R, "Group Show at Art Gallery. Refreshing Display", Christchurch Press, November 12, 1955, p 2.
- O Richard Ross, "Genuine New Zealand Art From The Group", Christchurch Star-Sun, November 25, 1955, p 14.
illus: W.A. Sutton, *Nor'wester in the Cemetery*.

1956

- O "New Trends Feature of Group Show", Christchurch Star-Sun, November 3, 1956, p 3.
- R O'R, "Modernity in Group Show. Dominant Chord of Presentation", Christchurch Press, November 5, 1956, p 11.

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- R J.N.K. "Impressive Paintings by McCahon in Group Show", Christchurch Press, October 15, 1957, p 5.
- I "Miss Olivia Spencer Bower", Christchurch Star-Sun, October 17, 1957, p 16.
Olivia Spencer Bower before Doris Lusk's *Queenstown* (?)
and a portrait of a boy.
- R R.F., "Appreciation of 1957 Group Show Matter for the Individual", Christchurch Star-Sun, October 16, 1957, p 16.

1958

- R/ J.N.K., "The Best Group Show for Several Years", Christchurch Press, October 14, 1958, p 19.

illus: Russell Clark, *Tuhoe Maori Head*

- I "Group Show Offers Live Variety", Christchurch Star-Sun, October 15, 1958, p 13.

Russell Clark, *Anchor Stones*
Pat Mulcahy, *Woodcarving of a bird*

1959

- I "At the 1959 Group Show", Christchurch Press, October 20, 1959, p 15.

illus: Russell Clark, *Jackson's House*
W.A. Sutton, *Pastoral*
(with three figures on the left, no longer in the painting)

- I Russell Clark, *Head in Plaster*,
Christchurch Star, October 19, 1959, p 3.

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- O/ "Group Show at Durham Street Gallery", Christchurch Star, October 8, 1960, p 3.

illus: W.A. Sutton, *Cemetery for Sheep*

- O/ "Something for Everybody at Annual Group Show", Christchurch Star, October 8, 1960, p 3.

- R/ J.N.K., "Older Members Command Attention in Group Show", Christchurch Press, October 13, 1960, p 17.

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- R/ J.N.K., "Young Painters in Group Show", Christchurch Press, October 10, 1961, p 17.

- I illus: Chrystabel Aitken, *Bronze Bust*
Christchurch Star, October 7, 1961, p 1.

- I "Group Art Show", illus - R. Gopas and A. Brook looking at two carvings, Christchurch Press, October 10, 1961, p 22.

- I "A Wood Carving", Christchurch Star, October 11, 1961, p 12.
P.M. Mulcahy, *An Ant.*

1962

- R/ J.N.K., "Group Show Not Up To Recent Standards", Christchurch Press, October 4, 1962, p 21.

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- I "From the Group Show", Christchurch Star, November 13, 1963, p 12.

Kurt von Meier, *Midwinter Nest of the Altion Bird*
 Freda Simmonds, *Parengarenga Birds*

- R J.N.K., "Wide Selection in Group Show", Christchurch Press, November 15, 1963, p 25.

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- R John Simpson, "Group Show One of The Best of the Year", Christchurch Press, November 4, 1964, p 18.

illus: Greer Twiss, *Exhausted Athlete*

- R John Oakley, "Creative Ability Evident in 1964 Group Exhibition", Christchurch Star, November 7, 1964, p 17.

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- R H.J.S., "Group Show Stimulating", Christchurch Press, November 10, 1965, p 7.

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- O "Mural To Be Feature", Christchurch Star, October 19, 1966, p 17.

- O "Group Hard to Define", Christchurch Press, October 29, 1966, p 16.

- S "Private Viewing of Annual Show", Christchurch Star, October 29, 1966, p 15.

- R "Vitality Feature of Group Show", Christchurch Press, 31 October, 1966, p 16.

- I "From The Group", Christchurch Star, November 2, 1966, p 15.

Yvonne Rust, *Ecclesiastical Altar Furniture*
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- R John Oakley, "Group Art Show", Christchurch Star, November 10, 1966, p 11.

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- O "Swing Back to Realism in Exhibition", Christchurch Star, October 28, 1967, p 5.

- R D.P(eebles), "The Group Show, 1967", Christchurch Press, October 31, 1967, p 13.

illus: Michael Smithers, *Whitebait Races*

- I "Topical Study", Christchurch Press, November 7, 1967, p 13.

Garth Tapper, *The Unemployed*

- R John Oakley, "Interesting Display of Art by 39 Members of Group", Christchurch Star, November 8, 1967, p 14.

1968

- I "City Artist's Work is School's Latest Buy", Christchurch Star, October 30, 1968, p 6.

illus: Ria Bancroft with her sculpture, *The Dormation of the Virgin Mary*

- I Tom Taylor, *Climatic*, *St Ivo*
Christchurch Star, October 30, 1968, p 10.

- R H.J.S., "A Good Group Show", Christchurch Press, November 1, 1968, p 19.

illus: Quentin MacFarlane, *Storm Sketch (Marine)*

- R John Oakley, "Group Show Cover Wide Range", Christchurch Star, November 5, 1968, p 14.

- I "The Group Show 1968", Ascent, Vol No 3, April 1969.

I. Hutson, *Lazarus*
W.A. Sutton, *Four Seasons, Winter, Autumn*
G.T. Moffitt, *The Big Fisherman, series 1*
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Q. MacFarlane, *Marine - Three Stages*
Olivia Spencer Bower, *Dark Girl*
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1969

- I "Beadle Bronzes to be Shown"
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- O "Artist to Miss Group Show", Christchurch Press, November 11, 1969, p 8.

- I Paul Beadle, *Monkey Cage*
Christchurch Star, November 19, 1969, p 15.

- R John Oakley, "Art for Everyone at the Group Show", Christchurch Star, November 21, 1969, p 11.

- R G.T.M(offit), "The 1969 Group Show", Christchurch Press, November 22, 1969, p 18.

illus: Brent Wong, *Trade Winds*, cat.15

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- O "Group and Two Man Shows", Christchurch Press, November 10, 1970, p 14.

- I "Weavers Exhibit Again", Christchurch Press, November 16, 1970, p 6.

Joan Culbert with her rug *Herald*.

- I Professor H.J. Simpson before Don Binney's *Canterbury Garden Bird*, Christchurch Star, November 17, 1970, p 20.

- R G.T.M. "44 Exhibiting in Group Show", Christchurch Press, November 23, 1970, p 5.

illus: Ian Hutson, *Jockey III*.

- R John Oakley, "Interesting Exhibition of New Zealand Art", Christchurch Star, November 28, 1970, p 21.

1971

- R "Group Show Contains Leading Artists Work", Wairarapa Times, June 9, 1971.

- R "Wairarapa Arts Centre", Arts and Community, vol 7, No 6 July 1971, p 11.

- O "New Policy for Group", Christchurch Press, November 9, 1971, p 12.

- I Carl Sydow, *Meander*, Christchurch Star, November 15, 1971, p 3.

- O "The Group Trying to Change its Image", Christchurch Star, November 17, 1971, p 14.

- R D.P., "Some Bright Spots in Group Show", Christchurch Press, November 19, 1971, p 19.

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- I "Showing in CSA Gallery"
Ian Hutson, *Nesting Figures*
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Christchurch Star, November 24, 1972, p 1.

- R G.T.M., "Group Show", Christchurch Press, November 28, 1972, p 13.

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- O "Early Opening of Group Show", Christchurch Press, September 11, 1973, p 10.
- O "Group's 45th Show Open Soon", Christchurch Star, September 12, 1973, p 19.
- O John Coley, "An Invitation to be Hung Here is an Honour", Christchurch Star, September 15, 1973, p 7.
- R John Summers, "Massive Display of Work in Group Show", Christchurch Star, September 19, 1974, p 19.
- R John Oakley, "Group's Latest Well Up to Standards of Past Shows", Christchurch Star, September 24, 1973, p 24.
- R G.T.M. "Lots of Good Things to See in the Group Show", Christchurch Press, September 25, 1973, p 12

1974

- R G.T.M. "Diverse Range in Group Show", Christchurch Press, September 14, 1974, p 17.
- O "The 'Group' on Show at CSA", Christchurch Star, September 18, 1974, p 28.
- R Peter Cape, "Group Gripe", New Zealand Listener 77, No 1822, October 26, 1974, p 25.

1975

- O "Women Featured in Group Show", Christchurch Press, October 7, 1975, p 19.
- O "Young Artists Featured in Group Show", Christchurch Star, October 8, 1975, p 11.
- R T.L.R(odney) W(ilson), "Modernist Showing at CSA Gallery", Christchurch Press, October 15, 1975, p 12.
- illus: Jackie Sullivan with one of her prints
(?) *Structure in Brass No 5.*
- R John Summers, "Drawings With That Sense of Pride", Christchurch Star, October 16, 1975, p 25.

1976

- R "Tarpaulin on Show", Christchurch Press, October 14, 1976, p 13
- illus: Don Driver, *Tarpaulin.*

1977

- O Derrick Rooney, "Rebel Group Now Going Out of Existence", Christchurch Press, November 11, 1977, p 17.

illus: Leo Bensemann, *G.T. Moffitt*
Juliet Peter, *Garden Goddess*

- R Michael Thomas, "Weak Group Show", Christchurch Press, November 16, 1977, p 8.

illus: W.A. Sutton (no title given - *Port Hills?*)

- R John Summers, "Display is One for the Road", Christchurch Star, November 17, 1977, p 27.

- I Ria Bancroft with her sculpture, *Mother Theresa of Calcutta*, Christchurch Press, November 17, 1977, p 13.

- I Jenny Hunt (no title given) piece of weaving, Christchurch Press, November 17, 1977, p 11.

- R John Summers, "Exhibition by the Group is Something to Remember", Christchurch Star, November 19, 1977, p 21.

illus: Leo Bensemann, *Portrait of John Coley**
W.A. Sutton, *Portrait of Bill Culbert*

(* more likely to be M.T. Moffitt)

- R Michael Thomas, "The Group Marks Jubilee", Christchurch Press, December 5, 1977, p 10.

illus: Doris Lusk, *Portrait of Colin McCahon* (1939)
W.A. Sutton, *Portrait of Bill Culbert* (1955)
Rosemary Johnson, *Landscape*

- R Peter Cape, "A Good Last Act", New Zealand Listener 88, No 1987, January 28, 1978, pp 24-25.

illus: see T.L.R. Wilson

- R T.L. Rodney Wilson, "The Group Goes Out", New Zealand Listener 88 No 1987, January 28, 1978, p 24.

illus: Ngaio Marsh, *Relief Workers* (1933)
Colin McCahon, *Sketch for landscape from Flagstaff* (1942)
Doris Lusk, *Botanical Gardens; Hawera* (1959)

- R T.L. Rodney Wilson, "'The Group' 1927-1977", Art in New Zealand, No , November/December/January 1977/8, p 19.

illus: E.N. Bracey, *Winter Land Signals* (8)(1969)

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- 1933 "New Zealand Society of Artists. Formation in Christchurch. Aims of the Organisation Announced", Christchurch Press, July 10, 1933, p 8.
- "Advancing Art. New Society Formed. Constitution Adopted", Christchurch Times, July 10, 1933, p 15.
- W. Basil Honour, "New Zealand Society of Artists", Art in New Zealand, Vol VI No 1, September 1933, pp 24-27.
- "N.Z. Society of Artists. Purposes Described. Opening of Club-rooms", Christchurch Press, October 19, 1933, p 10.
- "Society of Artists Opens its Clubrooms. F.A. Shurrock's Lecture" Christchurch Sun, October 19, 1933,
- "Artists' Society. New Club Rooms. Community of Interest", Christchurch Times, October 19, 1933, p 5.
- "Society of Artists. Exhibition to be Opened Tonight", Christchurch Press, October 26, 1933, p 16.
- illus: J.A. Johnstone touching up one of his pictures.
- S "Society of Artists. First Exhibition", Christchurch Times, October 26, 1933, p 3.
- I Cedric Savage (a Fijian Scene)
C. Perkins, *Maori Meeting*
Christchurch Sun, October 26, 1933, p 16.
- O "Society of Artists to Open Exhibition This Evening", Christchurch Sun, October 26, 1933, p 13.
- I "First Exhibition of the New Zealand Society of Artists",
W.H. Wright, *Louise* (plaster for bronze)
W. Basil Honour, *The Gorge, Broken River*
Christchurch Press, October 27, 1933, p 18.
- I "New Zealand Society of Artists Exhibition",
Cedric Savage, *Yasawas Isles, Fiji*
C. Perkins, *F.C. Chichester*
C. Perkins, *Girl in Meeting House*
Christchurch Times, October 27, 1933, p 3.
- S "Modern Artists. New Zealand Society. First Exhibition Opened" Christchurch Times, October 27, 1933, p 2.
- S "Society of Artists. Opening of its First Exhibition", Christchurch Sun, October 27, 1933, p 3.
- S "First Exhibition. Society of Artists. Guests At Private View", Christchurch Times, October 27, 1933, p 4.
- S "New Zealand Society of Artists. First Exhibition Opened. Stimulating Work", Christchurch Press, October 27, 1933, p 12.

- O "New Zealand Society of Artists. First General Exhibition", Christchurch Press, October 27, 1933, p 2.
- R "Stimulating Art. The Pictures on View", Christchurch Press, October 27, 1933, p 12.
- O "Art Exhibition. Much Interest Aroused", Christchurch Press, October 30, 1933, p 7.
- R Chiaroscuro, "New Influences in N.Z. Art. First Exhibition of Society of Artists. Reactions to Modernist Painting", Christchurch Sun, October 27, 1933, p 6.
- R Chiaroscuro, "Painters Who do Not See the Light. Further Impressions of Exhibition of Society of Artists. Work of T.A. McCormack", Christchurch Sun, October 28, 1933, p 8.
- R F.A. Shurrock, "Art Exhibition. Society of Artists. Newer Methods Used", Christchurch Times, October 30, 1933, p 3.
- R F.A. Shurrock, "Art Exhibition. Society of Artists. The Oil Paintings" (II), Christchurch Times, November 2, 1933, p 5.
- R Francis A. Shurrock, "Society of Artists. The Drawings", (III) Christchurch Times, November 3, 1933, p 7.
- O "Art Exhibition. Record Attendance", Christchurch Times, October 31, 1933, p 3.
- O "Sales of Art Works. Society of Artists", Christchurch Times, October 31, 1933, p 2.
- O "Auction Sale of Pictures. Society of Artists Hold Exhibition", Christchurch Sun, November 1, 1933, p 7.
- O "Society of Artists. Auction Sale of Pictures", Christchurch Press, November 2, 1933, p 7.
- O "Auction Sale of Art Works. Gifts to New Society", Christchurch Times, November 2, 1933, p 5.
- O "Art Exhibition", Christchurch Times, November 2, 1933, p 5.
- O "Society of Artists. Successful Exhibition. Another Large Attendance", Christchurch Times, November 3, 1933, p 11.
- O "Society of Artists. Successful Exhibition", Christchurch Press, November 3, 1933, p 8.
- O "Art Exhibition Closes. Society of Artists. Many Works Sold", Christchurch Press, November 6, 1933, p 10.
- O "Pictures Sold. Society of Artists", Christchurch Times, November 6, 1933, p 11.

- R Page, Frederick, "New Zealand Society of Artists"
- illus: Basil Honour, *The Gorge, Broken River*, Pl V, p 74
 J.A. Johnstone, *Evening, Lake Wanaka*, Pl VIII, p 89. (col)
 W.H. Wright, *Molly* (plaster for bronze) Pl IX, p 93
 F.A. Shurrock, *Sale Day* (lino cut) Pl X, p 94.
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- R "Art Notes. Christchurch", Art in New Zealand, Vol VI, No 2
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- 1934 O "Society of Artists. Monthly Meeting", Christchurch Press,
 October 20, 1934, p 28.
- I "Preparations for Art Exhibition", Members hanging pictures,
Christchurch Press, October 24, 1934, p 18.
- I "Art Exhibition",
 Lexie Macarthur, *The Nightingale*
 Flora Scales, *Still-Life*
Christchurch Sun, October 24, 1934, p 24.
- I Russell Clark, *The Red Scarf*,
Christchurch Times, October 24, 1934, p 3.
- I "Decorative Art",
 Tui Northey, *Russian Dancers*,
Christchurch Sun, October 25, 1934, p 20.
- I "Society of Artists Exhibition"
 Section of the paintings in the gallery,
Christchurch Press, October 26, 1934, p 28.
- S "Society of Artists. Annual Exhibition is Opened",
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- S "Private View. Society of Artists. Annual Exhibition",
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- S "Annual Exhibition. Society of Artists Entertain Many Guests",
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- O "Loan Exhibition Proposals for Next Year", Christchurch
Press, October 26, 1934, p 24.
- R "Modern Art. Second Exhibition. New Zealand Society of Artists",
Christchurch Times, October 26, 1934, p 6.
- O "N.Z. Society of Artists. Annual Exhibition", Christchurch Sun,
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- O "Exhibition of Paintings", Christchurch Press,
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- R Conrad, "N.Z. Society of Artists. Annual Exhibition (I) Paintings
 in Oil", Christchurch Press, October 26, 1934, p 24.

- R Conrad, "N.Z. Society of Artists. Annual Exhibition (II)", Christchurch Press, October 30, 1934, p 17.
- R Chiaroscuro, "Exuberance is a Feature of the Paintings. Exhibition of the N.Z. Society of Artists. Over 350 Works are Shown (1)", Christchurch Sun, October 27, 1934, p 8.
- R Chiaroscuro, "N.Z. Landscape School is Emerging. Paintings in Exhibition of Society of Artists. Diversity in Points of View (2)", Christchurch Sun, October 31, 1934, p 8.
- R Chiaroscuro, "Artists Approach to our Period. Exhibition Shows Outlook is Restricted. More Sincerity of Purpose (3)", Christchurch Sun, November 3, 1934, p 8.
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- R Frederick Page, "N.Z. Society of Artists' Exhibition", Art in New Zealand, Vol VII, No 2 (December 1934), pp 80-84.
 illus: W.H. Allen, *Summer in England*, oils, col Pl VI, p 81
 Russell Clark, *Saturday Night*, watercolour, Pl VII p 83.
 J.A. Johnstone, *Jewellery*, using stones and silver, Pl VIII, p 84.
 A.H. McLintock, *Towards the Hills*, Pl IX, p 85.
 C. Aitken, *Ducks*, stone carving, Pl X
 R. Perry, *Percival*, stone carving, p 86
- R "Art Notes. Christchurch", Art in New Zealand, Vol VII No 2, December 1934, pp 103-4.
- O "Split in Ranks of N.Z. Society of Artists. Members Resign and Will Form Separate Body. Two Main Causes of Friction are Alleged", Christchurch Sun, March 9, 1935, p 15.